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EXTRACT

FROM

The Rev. Mr. LAW's
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AN
E X T R A C T

FROM

Mr. L A W's

Spirit of P R A Y E R;

Being in several DIALOGUES.

P A R T II.





THE FIRST DISCOURSE

OF THE
NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

IN THE HEAVENS AND ON THE EARTH

BY
J. B. COOPER

OF THE
METHOD OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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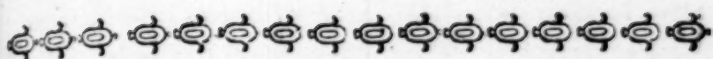
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THE
FIRST DIALOGUE
BETWEEN

Academicus, Rusticus and Theophilus.

At which *Humanus* was present.

Theoph. **A**CADEMICUS, your education has so accustomed you to the pleasure of reading variety of books, that you hardly propose any other end in reading, than the entertainment of your mind: Thus the spirit of prayer has only awakened in you a desire to see another part upon the same subject. This fault is very common to others, as well as scholars, and even to those who delight in reading good books.

Philo for this twenty years has been collecting and reading all the spiritual books he can hear of. He reads them, as the *critics* read Commentators and Lexicons; to be nice and exact in telling you the *style, spirit, and intent*, of this or that spiritual writer, how one is more accurate in this, and the other in that. *Philo* will ride you forty miles in winter to have a conversation about spiritual books, or to see a collection larger than his own. *Philo* is amazed at the deadness and insensibility of the Christian world, that they are such strangers to the spiritual nature of the Christian salvation; he wonders how they can be so zealous for the outward letter and form of ordinances, and so averse to that spiritual life, that they all point at, as the one thing needful. But *Philo*

never thinks how wonderful it is, that a man who knows regeneration to be the whole, should yet content himself with the love of books upon the new birth, instead of being born again himself. For all that is changed in *Philo*, is his taste for books. He is no more dead to the world, no more delivered from himself, is as fearful of adversity, as fond of prosperity, as easily provoked and pleased with trifles, as much governed by his *own* will, tempers, and passions, as unwilling to deny his appetites, or enter into war with himself, as he was twenty years ago. Yet all is well with *Philo*; he has no suspicion of himself; he dates the newness of his life from the time that he discovered the pearl of eternity in spiritual authors.

All this, *Academicus*, is said on your account, that you may not lose the benefit of this spark of the divine life that is kindled in your soul.

It demands at present an eagerness of another kind, than that of much reading, even upon the most spiritual matters.

Acad. I thank you, *Theophilus*; but did not imagine my eagerness after such books to be so dangerous a mistake.

Theoph. I have said nothing, my friend, with a design of hindering your acquaintance with all the truly spiritual writers. I would rather in a right way help you to a true intimacy with them: For he that converses rightly with them, has an happiness, that can hardly be over-valued.

My intention is only to abate, for a time, a spirit of eagerness after much reading, which in your state rather gratifies curiosity, than reforms the heart.

Suppose you had seen an angel from heaven, who had discovered to you a glimpse of that glorious union in which it lived with God. Suppose it had told you that your own soul was capable of all this, but that your flesh and blood would not suffer it to be imparted to you. Suppose it had told you, that all your life had been spent in helping this flesh and blood to more and more power over you, to hinder you

you from knowing and feeling the divine life within you. Suppose it had told you, that to this day you had lived in the grossest self-idolatry, loving, serving, honouring, and adoring yourself instead of loving, serving, and adoring God: That all your intentions, projects, cares, pleasures, and indulgences, had been only so much labour to bring you to the grave in a total ignorance of that great work, for which alone you was born into the world.

Suppose it had told you, that all this insensibility of your state, was wilfully brought upon yourself, because you had boldly resisted all the inward and outward calls of God, all the teachings, doings, and sufferings, of the son of God. Suppose it left you with this farewell, O man, awake; thy work is great, thy time is short, I am thy last trumpet; the grave calls for thy flesh and blood, thy soul must enter into a new lodging. To be born again, is to be an angel: Not to be born again, is to become a devil.

Tell me now, *Academicus*, what would you expect from a man who had been thus awakened, and pierced by the voice of an angel? Could you think he had any sense left, if he was not cast into the deepest depth of self-dejection, and self-abhorrence? Casting himself with a broken heart, at the feet of the divine mercy, desiring nothing but that, from that time, every moment of his life might be given unto God, in the most perfect denial of every temper, and inclination; that nourished the corruption of his nature: Wishing and praying from the bottom of his heart, that God would lead him into and through every thing inwardly and outwardly, that might destroy the evil workings of his nature, and awaken all that was holy and heavenly within him.

Or would you think he was enough affected with this angelic visit, if all that it had awakened in him, was only a longing desire to hear the same, or another angel talk again?

Acad. Oh *Theophilus*, you have said enough: For all that is within me consents to the truth of what you have said. I now feel in the strongest manner, that

that I have been rather amused, than edified, by what I have read.

Theoph. A spiritual book, *Academicus*, is a call to a real and total death to the life of corrupt nature, as that which *Adam* died in paradise, was to the life of heaven. All our redemption consists in our regaining that first life of heaven, to which *Adam* died in paradise: And the one work of redemption, is the one work of raising up of a life and spirit, contrary to that we derive from our fallen parents. To think therefore of any thing, but the continual, total denial of our earthly nature, is to overlook the one thing on which all depends. And to hope for any thing, to trust or pray for any thing, but the *life of God*, in our souls, is as useless to us, as placing our hope and trust in a graven image.

Now is your time, *Academicus*, to enter deeply into this great truth. You are just come out of the slumber of life, and begin to see the nature of your salvation. You are charmed with the discovery of a kingdom of heaven within you, and long to be entertained more and more with the nature, progress, and perfection of this kingdom in your soul.

But, my friend, stop a little. It is indeed great joy that the *pearl of great price* is found; but take notice, it is not yours, till, as the merchant did, *you sell all that you have*, and buy it. Think of a lower price, or be unwilling to give thus much for it; plead in your excuse, that you keep the commandments, and then you are that very rich young man in the gospel, who went away sorrowful from our Lord, when he had said, *If thou wilt be perfect*, that is, if thou wilt obtain the pearl, *sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor*; that is, die to thyself and then thou hast given all that thou hast to the poor, all is devoted and used for the love of God and thy neighbour. The apostate nature, corrupts every thing it touches; it defiles every thing it receives; it turns all the gifts and blessings of God into covetousness, partiality, pride, hatred, and envy.

Hence it is that sin rides in triumph over church and state, and from the court to the cottage all is over-

over-run with sensuality, guile, falseness, pride, wrath, selfishness, and every form of corruption. Every one swims away in this torrent, but he who hears and attends to the voice of the son of God, calling him to die to this life, to take up his cross, and follow him. Much learned pains has been often taken to prove *Rome*, or *Constantinople*, to be the seat of the beast, the antichrist, the scarlet whore. But, alas! they are not at such a distance from us, they are the properties of fallen human nature, and are all of them alive in our own selves, till we are dead to all the spirit and tempers of this world. They are everywhere, in every soul, where the heavenly nature, and spirit of the Holy Jesus is not. But when the human soul turns from itself, and turns to God, dies to itself, and lives to God in the spirit, tempers, and inclinations of the Holy Jesus, loving, pitying, suffering, and praying for all its enemies, and overcoming all evil with good, as Christ did; then, but not till then, are these monsters separate from it.

This, *Academicus*, is the fallen human nature, which is alive in every one, though in various manners, till he is born again. To think therefore of any religion, or to pretend to real holiness without dying to this old man, is building castles in the air; and can bring forth nothing, but *Satan* in the form of an angel of light. Would you know, *Academicus*, whence it is, that so many false spirits have appeared in the world, who have deceived themselves and others with false fire, and false light? It is this; they endeavoured to have turned to God, without turning from themselves; would be alive in God, before they were dead to their own nature; a thing as impossible in itself, as for a grain of wheat to be alive before it dies.

Now religion in the hands of corrupt nature, serves only to discover vices of a worse kind, than in nature left to itself. Hence are all the disorderly passions of religious men, which burn in a worse flame, than passions only employed about worldly matters: Pride, hatred, and persecution, under a cloak of religious

ligious zeal, will sanctify actions, which nature, left to itself, would start at.

Observe, Sir, the difference which cloaths make in those, who have it in their power to dress as they please : some are all for shew, colours, and glitters ; others are quite fantastical and affected in their dress : some have a grave and solemn habit ; others are quite simple and plain in the whole manner. But all this difference of dress is only an outward difference, that covers the same poor carcase, and leaves it full of all its own infirmities. Now all the truths of the gospel, when possessed by the *old man*, make just such a difference as is made by cloaths. Some put on a solemn, formal, prudent, outside carriage ; others appear in all the glitter and shew of religious colouring, and spiritual attainments ; but under all this outside difference, there lies the poor soul, unhelpt, in its own fallen state. And, it is not possible to be otherwise, till the spiritual life begins at the true root, grows out of *death*, and is born in a broken heart. Self-contempt, and Self-dential, are as suitable to this new-born spirit, as self-esteem, and self-seeking to the unregenerate man. Let me, therefore, my friend, conjure you, not to look forward, or cast about for spiritual advancement, till you have rightly taken this first step in the spiritual life. All your future progress depends upon it : for sin has its root in the bottom of your soul, it comes to life with your flesh and blood, and breathes in the breath of your natural life ; and therefore, till you die to nature, you live to sin ; and whilst this root of sin is alive in you, all the virtues you put on, are only like fine painted fruit hung on a dead tree.

Acad. But how am I to take this first step, which you so much insist upon ?

Theoph. You are to turn wholly from yourself, and to give up yourself wholly unto God,* in this or the like manner.

“ Oh my God, with all the strength of my soul,
“ assisted by thy grace, I desire and resolve to resist
“ and

* *Amazing ! First step ! It is the very highest attainment of the greatest saint under heaven.*

“ and deny all my own will, earthly tempers, selfish
 “ views, and inclinations; every thing that the spi-
 “ rit of this world, and the vanity of fallen nature,
 “ prompt me to. I give myself up wholly unto
 “ thee, to be all thine, to have, and do, and be, in-
 “ wardly and outwardly, according to thy good plea-
 “ sure. I desire to live for no other ends, with no
 “ other designs, but to accomplish the work which
 “ thou requirest of me, an humble, obedient, faith-
 “ ful, thankful instrument in thy hands, to be used
 “ as thou pleasest.”

You are not to content yourself with now and then making this oblation of yourself to God. It must be the daily, the hourly exercise of your mind; till it is wrought into your very nature, and becomes an essential state of your mind, till you feel yourself as habitually turned from all your own will, selfish ends, and earthly desires, as you are from stealing and murder; till the whole turn and bent of your spirit points as constantly to God, as the needle touched with the loadstone does to the north. This, Sir, is your first * step in the spiritual life; this is the key to all the treasures of heaven; this unlocks the sealed book of your soul, and makes room for the light and spirit of God to arise up in it. Without this, the spiritual life is but spiritual talk, and only assists nature to be pleased with a fancied holiness.

You may perhaps think this an hard saying. But do not go away sorrowful, like the young man in the gospel. I shall now leave you to consider, whether you will give up all the wealth of the old man for this heavenly pearl. I do not expect your answer now, but will stay for it till to-morrow.

But pray, gentlemen, who is this *Humanus*? I do not remember to have seen him before: He seems not willing to speak, yet is often biting his lips at what is said.

Rust. This *Humanus*, Sir, is my neighbour; but so ignorant of the nature of the gospel, that he is often trying

* Not so: It is not the threshold, but the whole building.

trying to persuade me into a disbelief of it. I say ignorant (though he is a learned man) because I am well assured, that no man ever did, or can oppose the gospel, but through a total ignorance of what it is in itself: For the gospel, when rightly understood, is irresistible; it brings more good news to the human nature, than sight to the blind, limbs to the lame, health to the sick, or liberty to the condemned slave. But this neighbour of mine has never yet been in sight of the real gospel; he knows nothing of it, but what he has picked up out of the books, that have been written against it, and for it.

But this is enough concerning the man. He comes with me at his own desire, and upon promise, not to interrupt our conversation; but to be a silent hearer, till it is all over. And therefore, if you please, Sir, I beg our conversation may for a while turn upon the chief points of religion, that he may hear the whole nature, the necessity and blessedness of the Christian redemption.

Theoph. Your neighbour is welcome, and I pray God to give him an heart attentive to those truths, which have made so good an impression upon you. Your friend *Humanus* lays claim to a religion of nature and reason: I join with him, with all my heart. No other religion can be right, but that which has its foundation in nature. For the God of nature can require nothing of his creatures, but what the state of their nature calls them to. Nature is his great law, that speaks his whole will both in heaven and on earth; and to obey nature, is to obey the God of nature; to please him, and to live to him, in the highest perfection. God indeed has many after-laws; but it is after his creatures have fallen from nature, and lost its perfection. But all these after-laws have no other end or intention, but to repair nature, and bring men back to their first natural state of perfection. What say you now, *Academicus*, to all these matters?

Acad. You know, how these matters have affected me, ever since I read some books lately published.

From

From that time, I have seen things in such a newness of light, as makes me take my former knowledge for a dream. A dream I may justly say, since all my labour was taken up in searching into a seventeen hundred years history of doctrines, disputes, decrees, heresies, schisms, and sects, wherever to be found, in *Europe, Asia, and Africa*. From this goodly heap of stuff crouded into my mind, I have been settling matters betwixt all the present Christian divisions both at home and abroad, according to the best rules of criticism; having little or no other idea of a religious man, than that of a stiff maintainer of certain points against all those that oppose them. And in this respect, I believe I may say, that I only swam away in the common torrent.

And in this laborious dream I had in all likelihood ended my days; had not those books shewn me, that religion lay nearer home. But however, though I seem to be entered into a region of light, yet I must not forget to tell you, what some of my friends say: that in those books, there are many things asserted, which have not scripture to support them.

Theoph. Is there not some reason *Academicus*, to take this objection of your learned friends to be a mere pretence? For what is more fully grounded upon scripture, than the doctrine of a real regeneration? And yet the *plain letter* of scripture, upon the most important of all points, the very life and essence of our redemption, is not only overlooked, but openly opposed, by the generality of men of sober learning. But this point has not only the plain letter of scripture for it; but what the letter asserts, is absolutely required by the whole spirit and tenor of the New Testament. All the epistles of the Apostles proceed upon the supposed certainty of this one great point.

A son of God, united with, and born in, our nature, that his nature may be produced in us; an holy spirit, breathing in our souls, quickning the dead in sin, is the letter and spirit of the Apostles' writings; grounded upon the plain letter of our Lord's own

B

words,

words, that unless we are born again of water, and the spirit we cannot see the kingdom of heaven.

Again: Is not the plain letter of scripture, that *Adam* died the day that he did eat of the earthly tree? Have we not the most solemn asseveration of God for the truth of this? Was not the change which *Adam* found in himself, a demonstration of the truth of this fact? Instead of the image and likeness of God in which he was created, he was stript of all his glory, afraid of being seen, and unable to see himself uncovered; delivered up a slave to the rage of all the elements of this world, not knowing which way to look, or what to do in a world, where he was dead to all that he formerly felt, and alive only to a new and dreadful feeling of heat and cold, shame and fear, and horrible remorse of mind, at his said entrance in a world, whence God and his own glory, was departed. Death enough surely!

Death in its highest reality, a much greater change, than when an animal of flesh and blood is only changed into a cold lifeless carcase.

A death, that in all nature has none equal to it, none of the same nature with it, but that which the angels died, when, from angels of God, they became living devils, and slaves to darkness. Say that the angels lost no life, that they did not die a real death, because they are yet alive in the horrors of darkness; and then you may say, with the same truth, that *Adam* did not die, when he lost God, and the first glory of his creation, because he afterwards breathed in a world which was outwardly, in all its parts, full of the same curse that was within himself. But farther, not only the plain text, and the change of state, which *Adam* found in himself, demonstrated a real death to his former state; but the whole tenor of scripture requires it; all the system of our redemption proceeds upon it. For what need of redemption, if *Adam* had not lost his first state? What need of the deity, to enter again into the human nature, not only as acting, but being born in it? What need of all this mysterious method, to bring the life from
above

above again into man, if the life from above had not been lost? It is true indeed, that *Adam*, in his death to the divine life, was left in the possession of an earthly life. But 'tis wonderful that any man should imagine, *Adam* did not die on the day of his sin, because he had as good a life left in him, as the beasts of the field have.

For is this *the life*, or is *the death* that such animals die, the life and death with which our redemption is concerned? Are not all the scriptures full of a life and death of a much higher kind? What ground or reason then can there be to think of the death of an animal of this world, when we read of the death, that *Adam* was to die the day of his sin? For does not all that befel him on the day of his sin, shew that he lost a much greater life, suffered a more dreadful change, than that of giving up the breath of this world? For in the day of his sin, this angel of paradise; this Lord of the new creation, fell from the throne of his glory (like *Lucifer* from heaven) into the state of a poor naked, distressed animal of flesh and blood; inwardly and outwardly feeling the curse in himself, and all the creation; and reduced to have only the faith of the devils, to believe and tremble. Proof enough, surely, that *Adam* was dead to the life, of God; and that, with his death, all that was divine and heavenly in his soul, was quite at an end. Now this life to which *Adam* then died, is that life which all his posterity are in want of. And is there any reason to say, that mankind, in their natural state, are not dead to that first life in which *Adam* was created, because they are alive to this world? Yet this is as well as to say, that *Adam* did not die a real death, because he had afterwards an earthly life in him. How comes our Lord to say, *that unless ye eat the flesh, and drink the blood, of the Son of Man, ye have no life in you?* Did he mean, ye have no earthly life in you? How comes the apostle to say, *He that hath the Son of God has life, but he that hath not the Son of God hath not life?* Does he mean the life of this world? No. But both *Christ* and his apostles assert this great truth, that all

mankind are in the state of *Adam's death*, till they are made alive again by the *Son*, and *Holy Spirit*. So plain is it, both from the letter and spirit of scripture, that *Adam* died a *real death* to the kingdom of God in the day of his sin. Take away this death, and all the scheme of our redemption has no ground left to stand upon.

For without the *reality* of a new birth, founded on a *real death* in the fall of *Adam*, the Christian scheme is but a skeleton of empty words, a detail of strange mysteries between God and man, that do nothing, and have nothing to do.

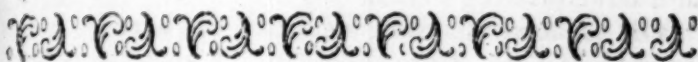
Oh *Academicus*, what a blindness there is in the world! What a stir is there among mankind about *religion*, and yet almost all seem to be afraid of *that*, in which alone is salvation!

Poor mortals! What is the one desire of your hearts? What is it that you call happiness, and matter of rejoicing? Is it not when every thing about you helps you to stand upon higher ground, and gratifies every pride of life? And yet life itself is the loss of every thing, unless *pride* be overcome. Oh stop a while in contemplation of this great truth. It is a truth as unchangeable as God; it is written and spoken through all nature; heaven and earth, fallen angels, and redeemed men, all bear witness to it. The truth is this: *Pride must die in you, or nothing of heaven can live in you*. Under the banner of this truth, give up yourselves to the meek and humble spirit of the holy Jesus. This is the one way, the one truth, and the one life. There is no other door into the sheepfold of God. Every thing else is the working of the devil in the fallen nature of man. Humility must sow the seed, or there can be no reaping in heaven. Look not at pride only as an unbecoming temper; or humility only as a decent virtue; for the one is death, and the other is life; the one is all hell, and the other is all heaven.

So much as you have of pride, so much you have of the fallen angel in you; so much as you have of true humility, so much you have of the Lamb of God.

Could

Could you see with your eyes what every stirring of pride does to your soul, you would beg of every thing you meet, to tear the viper from you; though with the loss of an hand, or an eye. Could you see what a sweet, divine, transforming power there is in humility, how it expels the poison of your fallen nature, and makes room for the spirit of God to live in you; you would rather wish to be the *footstool* of all the world, than to want the smallest degree of it. My friends, for this time, adieu!



T H E

S E C O N D D I A L O G U E.

Theoph. FROM this view of things, we see a *spirit of longing* after the life of this world, made *Adam* and us to be the poor pilgrims on earth, that we are; so the *spirit of prayer*, or the longing desire of the heart after Christ, and God, and heaven, raises us out of the miseries of time, into the riches of eternity. Thus seeing and knowing our first and our present state, every thing calls us to prayer; and the desire of our heart becomes the spirit of prayer. And when the spirit of prayer is in us, then prayer is no longer considered, as only the business of this or that hour, but is the continual panting or breathing of the heart after God. Its petitions are not picked out of manuals of devotion; it loves its own language; it speaks most when it says least. If you ask what its words are, they are *spirit*, they are *life*, they are *love*, that unite with God.

Acad. I apprehend, Sir, that what you here say of the spirit of prayer, will be taken by some for a censure

sure upon hours and forms of prayer ; though I know you have no such meaning.

Rust. Pray let me speak again to *Academicus* ; His learning seems to be always upon the watch, to find out some excuse for not receiving the whole truth. Does not *Theophilus* here speak of the *spirit of prayer*, as a *state* of the heart, which is become the *governing* principle of the soul ? And if it is a living state of the heart, must it not have its life in itself, independent of every outward time and occasion ? And yet must it not, at the same time, be that alone which disposes the heart to delight in hours, and times, and occasions of prayer ? Suppose he had said, that *honesty* is an inward living principle of the heart, a rectitude of the mind, that has all its life and strength within itself. Could this be thought to censure all times and occasions of performing outward acts of honesty ? Now the *spirit* of prayer differs from all outward acts and forms of prayer, just as the *honesty of the heart*, or a living rectitude of mind, differs from outward and occasional acts of honesty. And yet should a man disregard times and occasions of outward acts of honesty, on pretence that true honesty was an inward living principle ; who would not see, that such a one had as little of the inward spirit, as of the outward acts of honesty ? *St. John* saith, *If any man hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion to him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ?* Just so, it may be said, if a man neglects times and hours of prayer, *how dwelleth the spirit of prayer in him ?* And yet, its own life and spirit is vastly superior to, and stays for no particular hours, or forms of words. And in this sense it is truly said, that it has its own language, that it wants not to pick words out of manuals of devotion, but is always speaking forth spirit and life, and love towards God. But pray, *Theophilus*, do you go on, as you intended.

Theoph. I shall only add, before we pass on to another point, that, from what has been said, it plainly follows, that the *sin* of all sins, or the *heresy* of all heresies,

refies, is a *worldly spirit*. We are apt to consider this temper only as an infirmity, or pardonable failure ; but it is indeed the great *apostasy* from God, and the divine life. It is not a single sin, but the whole nature of sin, that leaves no possibility of coming out of our fallen state, till it be renounced with all the strength of our hearts. Every sin, be it of what kind it will, is only a branch of the worldly spirit that lives in us. *There is but one that is good, saith our Lord, and that is God.* In the same strictness of expression it must be said, there is but one life that is good, and that is the life of God and heaven. Depart in the least degree from the goodness of God, and you depart into evil ; because nothing is good but his goodness.

Choose any life, but the life of God and heaven, and you choose death ; for death is nothing else but the loss of the life of God. The creatures of this world have but one life, and that is the life of this world : This is their one life, and one Good. Eternal beings have but one life, and one good ; and that is the life of God. God could not create man to have a will of his own, and a life of his own, different from the life and will that is in himself ; this is more impossible than for a good tree to bring forth corrupt fruit. God can only delight in his own life, his own goodness, and his own perfections ; and therefore cannot love, or delight, or dwell, in any creatures, but where his own goodness and perfections are to be found. Like can only unite with like, heaven with heaven, and hell with hell ; and therefore the life of God must be the life of the soul, if the soul is to unite with God. Hence it is, that all the methods of our redemption, have only this one end, to take from us that earthly life we have gotten by the fall, and to kindle again the life of God and heaven in our souls. Not to deliver us from that gross and sordid vice called *covetousness*, which Heathens can condemn, but to take the whole spirit of this world entirely from us ; because *all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride*

pride of life, is not of the father; that is, is not that life, which we had from God by our creation; but is of this world; is brought into us by our fall from God into the life of this world. And therefore a worldly spirit is not to be considered, as a single sin; but as a state of real death to the kingdom and life of God in our souls. Management, prudence, or an artful trimming betwixt God and Mammon, are here all in vain; it is not only the grossness of an outward, worldly behaviour, but the spirit, the prudence, the wisdom of this world, that is our separation from the life of God.

Hold this therefore, *Academicus*, as a certain truth, that the heresy of all heresies is a worldly spirit. It is the whole nature and misery of our fall; it keeps up the death of our souls; and, so long as it lasts, makes it impossible for us to be born again. It is the greatest blindness and darkness of our nature, and keeps us in the grossest ignorance both of heaven and hell. For we feel neither the one, nor the other, so long as the spirit of this world reigns in us. Light, and truth, and the gospel, so far as they concern eternity, are all empty sounds to the worldly spirit. His own good, and his own evil, govern all his hopes and fears; and therefore he can have no religion, farther than as it can be made serviceable to the life of this world. *Publicans* and *Harlots* are all of the spirit of this world; but its highest birth, are the *Scribes*, the *Pharisees*, and *Hypocrites*, who turn godliness into gain, and serve God for the sake of mammon; these live, and move, and have their being, in and from the spirit of this world.—Of all things therefore my friend, detest the spirit of this world, or you must live and die an *utter stranger* to all that is divine and heavenly. You will go out of the world in the same poverty and death, in which you entered into it. For a worldly spirit can know nothing, feel nothing, taste nothing, delight in nothing, but with earthly senses, and after an earthly manner. *The natural man, saith the apostle, receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, they are foolishness unto him. He cannot*

cannot know them, because they are *spiritually discerned*; that is, they can only be discerned by that spirit, which he hath not. Now the true reason of the absolute impossibility for the natural man, how polite, and learned, and acute soever he be, is this; so far as our life reaches, so far we understand, and feel, and know, and no farther. All after this is, only the play of our imagination, amusing itself with the *dead pictures* of its own ideas. Now this is all that the natural man, can possibly do with the things of God. He can only contemplate them, as so many *dead Ideas*, that he receives from books, or hearsay; and so can learnedly dispute and quarrel about them, and laugh at those as Enthusiasts, who have a living sensibility of them. He is only the worse for his *dead Ideas* of divine truths; they become bad nourishment to all his natural tempers: he is proud of his ability to discourse about them, and loses all humility, through a vain and haughty contention for them. His *zeal* for religion is envy and wrath, his orthodoxy is pride and obstinacy, his love of the truth is hatred and ill-will to those who dare to dissent from him. This is the constant effect of the religion of the natural man, who is under the dominion of the spirit of this world. He cannot make a better use of his knowledge, than this; and all for this plain reason, because he stands at the *same distance* from a *living sensibility* of the truth, as the man that is born blind, does from a living sensibility of light.

Acad. You know, Sir, that in the morning you told me of a first step, that must be the *beginning* of a spiritual life; you gave me till to-morrow to speak my mind and resolution about it. But you have now extorted my answer from me: with all the strength that I have, I turn from every thing that is not God, and his holy will; with all the desire of my heart, I give up myself wholly to the light, and Holy Spirit of God; pleased with nothing in this world, but as it gives time and place, and occasions, of doing and being that, which my heavenly father would have me to do, and be; seeking for no happiness from
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his earthly fallen life, but that of overcoming all its spirit and tempers. But I believe, *Theophilus*, you had something farther to say.

Theoph. Indeed, *Academicus*, there is hardly any knowing, when one has said enough of the evil effects of a *worldly spirit*. It is the canker that eateth up all the fruits of our other good tempers; it leaves no degree of goodness in them, but transforms all that we are to do, into its own earthly nature. The Philosophers of old, began all their virtue in a total renunciation of the spirit of this world. They saw with the eyes of heaven, that darkness was not more contrary to light, than the wisdom of this world to the spirit of virtue; therefore they allowed of no progress in virtue, but so far as a man had overcome himself, and the spirit of this world.

But the doctrine of the cross of Christ, the last, the highest, the most finishing stroke given to the spirit of this world, that speaks more in *one word* than all the philosophy of voluminous writers, is yet professed by those, who are in more friendship with the world, than was allowed to the disciples of *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, *Plato*, or *Epicetus*.

Nay, if those antient sages were to start up among us with their divine wisdom, they would bid fair to be treated by the sons of the gospel, if not by some fathers of the church, as dreaming enthusiasts.

But, *Academicus*, this is a standing truth, the world can only love its own, and wisdom can only be justified of her children: The heaven-born *Epicetus* told one of his scholars, that *then* he might *first* look upon himself, as having made *some true* proficiency in virtue, when the world took him for a fool; an oracle like that, which said, *The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*.

If you was to ask me, whence is all the degeneracy of the present Christian church, I should place it all in a *worldly spirit*. If here you see open wickedness, there only forms of godliness; if here superficial holiness, political piety, crafty prudence; there haught-

ty-sanctity, partial zeal, envious orthodoxy; if almost every where you see a *Jewish* blindness, and hardness of heart, and the church trading with the gospel, as visibly, as the old *Jews* bought and sold beasts in their temple; all this is only so many forms and proper fruits of the worldly spirit. This is the great *net*, with which the devil becomes a fisher of men; and be assured of this, that every son of man is in this *net*, till, through the spirit of Christ, he breaks out of it.

I say the *spirit* of Christ, for nothing else can deliver him from it. Trust to any kind, or form of religious observances, to any number of the most plausible virtues, to any kinds of learning, or efforts of human prudence, and I will tell you what your case will be; you will overcome *one* temper of the world, merely by cleaving to another. For nothing leaves the world, nothing can possibly overcome it, but the spirit of Christ. Hence it is, that many learned men, with all the rich furniture of their brain, live and die slaves to the spirit of this world; and can only differ from gross worldings, as the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* differ from *Publicans* and *Sinners*: it is because the spirit of Christ is not the *one* thing that is the *desire* of their hearts; and therefore their learning only works with the spirit of this world, and becomes itself, no small part of the *Vanity of Vanities*. Would you farther know, the evil effects of a worldly spirit, you need only look at the blessed effects of the *spirit of prayer*; for the one goes downwards with the same strength, as the others go upwards; the one weds you to an earthly nature, as the other unites you to Christ, and God, and heaven. The spirit of prayer, is a *pressing forth* of the soul out of this earthly life; it is a stretching with all its desire after the life of God; it is a leaving, as far as it can, all its *own spirit*, to receive a spirit from above, to be one life, one love, one spirit with Christ in God. This prayer, which is an emptying itself of all its own natural tempers, and an opening itself for the love of God to enter into it, is the prayer in *the name of Christ*, to which nothing is denied. For the love which God bears
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to the soul, his eternal, never-ceasing desire to enter into it, to dwell in it, stays no longer, than till the door of the heart opens for him. For nothing can keep God out of the soul, or hinder his union with it, but the *desire* of the heart turned from him.

A will, given up to earthly goods, is at grass with *Nebuchadnezzar*, and has one life with the beasts of the field: for earthly desires keep up the *same* life in a man and an ox. When therefore a man wholly turnath his will to earthly desires, he dies to the excellency of his natural state, and may be said only to live, and move, and have his being, in the life of this world, as the beasts have.—Earthly food, only desired and used for the support of the earthly body, is suitable to man's present condition, and the order of nature: but when the desire of the soul is set upon earthly things, then the humanity is degraded, is fallen from God; and the life of the soul is made as *earthly* and *bestial*, as the life of the body.

And this is to be noted well, that death can make no alteration of this state of the will; it only takes off the outward covering of flesh and blood, and forces the soul to see, and feel, and know, what a life, what a state, *food*, *body*, and *habitation*, its own will has brought forth for it. Oh *Academicus*, stop a while, and let your hearing be turned into feeling. Tell me, is there any thing in life that deserves a thought, but how to keep our will in a right state, and to get that *purity* of heart, which alone can see, and know, and find, and possess God? Is there any thing so frightful as this worldly spirit, which turns the soul from God, makes it an house of darkness, and feeds it with the food of time, at the expence of all the riches of eternity.

On the other hand, what can be so desirable as good as the *spirit of prayer*, which empties the soul of all its evil; separates death and darkness from it; leaves *time* and the *world*; and becomes one life, one light, one spirit with Christ and God?

Think, my friends, of these things, with something more than thoughts; let your hungry souls eat of the nourishment of them; and desire only to live

that with the *whole spirit* of your minds, you may live and die united to God : and thus let this conversation end, till God gives us another meeting.



T H E

T H I R D D I A L O G U E.

Rust. I Have brought again with me, gentlemen, my silent friend, *Humanus*, and upon the same condition of being silent still. But though his silence is the same, yet he is quite altered. For this twenty years I have known him to be of an even, chearful temper, full of good-nature, and even quite calm and dispassionate in his attacks upon Christianity; never provoked by what was said either against his infidelity, or in defence of the gospel. He used to boast of his being free from those four passions, which, he said, were so easy to be seen, in most defenders of the gospel-meekness. But now he is morose, peevish, and full of chagrin; and seems to be as uneasy with himself, as with every body else. I tell him, but he will not own it, that his case is this: The truth has touched him; but it is only so far, as to be his *tormentor*. It is only as welcome to him, as a thief that has taken from him all his riches, goods, and armour, wherein he trusted. The christianity he used to oppose is vanished; and therefore all the weapons he had against it, are dropt out of his hands. It now appears to stand upon another ground, to have a better nature, than what he imagined; and therefore he, and his scheme of infidelity, are quite disconcerted. But though his arguments have lost their strength, his heart is left in the state it was; it stands in the same opposition to Christianity as it did before, and yet without any

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ideas of his brain to support it. And this is the true ground of his present, uneasy, peevish state of mind. He has nothing now to subsist upon, but the resolute hardness of his heart, his pride and obstinacy. Though it is with some reluctance, yet I have chosen thus to make my neighbour known both to himself, and to you, that you may speak of such matters as may give the best relief to the state he is in.

Theoph. His trial is the greatest and hardest that belongs to human nature: And yet it is absolutely necessary to be undergone.

Nature must become a torment and burden to itself, before it can willingly give itself up to that death, through which alone it can pass into life. There is no real conversion, whether it be from infidelity, or any other life of sin, till a man comes to know, and feel, that nothing less than his *whole* nature is to be parted with, and yet finds in himself no possibility of doing it. This is the despair by which we lose all our own life, to find a new one in God. For here, in this place it is, that faith, and hope, and true seeking to Christ, are born.—But till all is lost that we had any trust in; faith and hope, and turning to God in prayer, are only things practised by rule and method; but they are not in us, till we have done feeling any trust or confidence in ourselves. Happy therefore is it for your friend, that every thing is taken from him on which he trusted. In this state, one sigh or look to God for help, would be the beginning of his salvation. Let us therefore try to improve this happy moment to him, not so much by arguments, as by the arrows of divine love.

For *Humanus*, tho' hitherto without Christ, is still within the reach of divine love: He belongs to God; God created him for himself, to be an habitation of his own spirit; and God has brought him and us together, that the lost sheep may be found, and brought back to its heavenly shepherd.

Oh *Humanus*, love is my bait; you must be caught by it; it will put its hook into your heart, and force you

you to know, that of all strong things, nothing is so strong, so irresistible, as divine love.

It brought forth all the creation; it kindles all the life of heaven; it is the song of all the angels of God. It has redeemed all the world: it seeks for every sinner upon earth; it embraces all the enemies of God; and, from the beginning to the end of time, the one work of providence, is the one work of love.

Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, were all of them messengers of divine love. They came to kindle a fire on earth, and that fire was the love which burns in heaven. Ask what God is? His name is love; he is the good, the perfection, the joy, the glory, and blessing of heaven and earth. Ask what Christ is? He is the universal remedy of all evil; he is the destruction of misery, sin, death, and hell. He is the resurrection and life of all fallen nature. He is the unwearied compassion, the long-suffering pity, the never-ceasing mercifulness of God to every want and infirmity of human nature.

He is the breathing forth of the heart, and spirit of God, into all the dead race of *Adam*. He is the seeker, the finder, the restorer, of all that was lost and dead to the life of God. He is the love, that, from *Cain* to the end of time, prays for all its murderers; the love that willingly suffers and dies among thieves, that thieves may have a life with him in paradise: The love that visits publicans, harlots, and sinners, that wants and seeks to forgive, where most is to be forgiven.

Oh, my friends, let us surround and encompass *Humanus* with these flames of love, till he cannot make his escape from them, but must become a willing victim to their power. For the universal God is universal love; all is love, but that which is hellish and earthly. All religion is the spirit of love; all its gifts and graces are the gifts and graces of love; it has no breath, no life, but the life of love. Nothing exalts, nothing purifies, but the fire

of love ; nothing changes death into life, earth into heaven, men into angels, but love alone. Love breathes the spirit of God ; its words and works are the inspiration of God. It speaketh not of itself, but the word, the eternal word of God speaketh in it ; for all that love speaketh, that God speaketh, because love is God. Love is heaven revealed in the soul ; it is light, and truth ; it has no errors, for all errors are the want of love. Love has no more of pride, than light has of darkness ; it stands and bears all its fruits from a depth of humility. Love is of no sect or party ; it neither makes, nor admits of any bounds ; you may as easily inclose the light, or shut up the air, as confine love to a sect or party. It lives in the *liberty*, the *universality*, the *impartiality*, of heaven. It believes in one, holy, catholic God, the God of all spirits ; it joins with the catholic spirit of the one God, who unites with all that is good, and is meek, patient, well-wishing, and long-suffering over all the evil that is in nature. Love, like the spirit of God, rideth upon the wings of the wind ; and is in communion with all the saints that are in heaven and on earth. Love is quite pure ; it hath no by-ends ; it seeks not its own ; it has but *one will*, and that is, to give itself into every thing, and overcome all evil with good. Lastly, love cometh down from heaven ; it regenerateth the soul from above ; it blotteth out all transgressions ; it taketh from death its sting, from the devil his power, and from the serpent his poison. It healeth all the infirmities of our earthly birth ; it gives eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, and makes the dumb to speak ; it cleanses the lepers, and casts out devils, and puts man in paradise before he dies. It liveth wholly to the will of him, of whom it is born ; its meat and drink is, to do the will of God. It is the resurrection and life of every divine virtue, a fruitful mother of true humility, boundless benevolence, unwearied patience, and bowels of compassion. This *Rusticus*, is the religion of divine love, the true church of God, where the life of God is found, and

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lived, and to which your friend *Humanus* is called by us. We direct him to nothing but the inward life of Christ, to the working of the Holy Spirit of God, which alone can deliver him from the evil that is in his own nature, and give him a power to become a son of God.

Rust. My neighbour has infinite reason to thank you, for this lovely draught you have given of the spirit of religion. But pray let us now hear, how we are to enter into this love, or rather what God has done to introduce us into it.

Theoph. The beginning of this redeeming love of God, is in that *Immanuel*, or God with us, given to the first *Adam*, as the seed of the woman, which in him, and his posterity, should bruise the head, and overcome the life, of the serpent. This is love indeed, because it is universal, and reaches from the first to the last man. Miserably as mankind are divided, and all at war with one another, every one appropriating God to themselves, yet they all have but one God, who is the spirit of all, the life of all, and the lover of all. Men may divide themselves, to have God to themselves; they may hate and persecute one another for God's sake; but this is a blessed truth, that God with an unalterable meekness, sweetness, patience, and good-will towards all, waits for all, calls them all, redeems them all, and comprehends all in the outstretched arms of his catholic love. Ask not therefore how we shall enter into this religion of salvation; we have not far to go to find it. It is every man's own treasure; it is a root of heaven, a seed of God, sown into our souls; and, like a small grain of mustard-seed, has a power of growing to be a tree of life. Here my friend, you should, once for all, observe, *where* and *what* the true nature of religion is, its place is within; its work and effect is *within*: its glory, its life, its perfection, is all within; it is the raising a new life, and new love in us. This was the spiritual nature of religion in its beginning, and this is its *whole nature* to the end of time; it is nothing else, but the power, and life, and spirit of

God, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, creating, and reviving life in the fallen soul, and driving all its evil out of it.

Here therefore we are come to this firm conclusion, that let religion, have ever so many *shapes, forms or reformations*, it is no true divine service, no proper *worship* of God, but so far as it *serves, worships, conforms*, and gives itself up to this *operation* of the holy, triune God, as living and dwelling in the soul. Keep close to this idea of religion, as an inward spiritual life, in the soul; observe all its works within you, the death and life that are found there; seek for no good, no comfort, but in the awaking of all that is holy and heavenly in your heart; and then, so much as you have of this inward religion, so much you have of a real salvation. For salvation is only a victory over nature; so far as you resist and renounce your own selfish, and earthly nature, so far as you overcome all your own natural tempers, so far God lives, and operates in you; he is the light, the life, and the spirit of your soul; and you worship him in spirit, and in truth. For nothing worships God, but the Spirit of Christ his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased. This is as true, as that *no man hath known the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son revealeth him*. Look now at any thing as religion, but a strict conformity to the life and spirit of Christ; and then, though every day was full of burnt-offerings, and sacrifices, yet you would be only like those religionists, who *drew near to God with their lips, but their hearts were far from him*.

For the heart is always far from God, unless the spirit of Christ be in it. But no one has the living spirit of Christ, but he who in all his conversation walketh, as he walked. Consider these words of the apostle, *My little children, of whom I travail in birth, till Christ be formed in you*. This is the sum total of all, and, if this is wanting, all is wanting. Thus saith he, *If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his*; nay, though he could say of himself, (as our

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Lord says many will) Have I not prophesied in the name of Christ, cast out devils, and done many wonderful works? Yet such a one not being *led by the spirit of Christ*, is that very man, whose high state the apostle makes to be a mere nothing, because he hath not that spirit of charity, which is the spirit of Christ. Again, *There is no condemnation to those, who are in Christ Jesus*; therefore to be in Christ Jesus, is to have that spirit of charity, which is the spirit, and life of all virtues. Now here you are to observe, that the apostle no more rejects *all outward religion*, when he says *circumcision is nothing*, than he rejects *prophesying*, and *faith*, and *alms-giving*, when he says they *profit nothing*; he only teaches this solid truth, that the kingdom of God is within us, and that it all consists in the state of our heart; and that therefore all our outward observances, all the most specious virtues, profit nothing, are of no value, unless the hidden man of the heart, the spirit of Christ, be the doer of them.

Thus, says he, *They who are led by the spirit of God, are the sons of God*. And therefore none else, be they who, or where or what they will, clergy, or laity, none are, or can be, sons of God, but they who give up themselves to the leading and guidance of the spirit of God, desiring to be moved, inspired, and governed solely by it. Indeed all scripture brings us to this conclusion, that all religion is but a dead work, unless it be the work of the spirit of God; and that sacraments, prayers, singing, preaching, hearing, are only to many ways of giving up ourselves more and more to the inward working, enlightening, quickening, sanctifying spirit of God; and for this end, that the curse of the *fall* may be swallowed up in victory, and a true, real, Christ-like nature formed in us, by the same spirit, by which it was formed in the holy Virgin *Mary*. Now for the absolute necessity, of this turning wholly to the spirit of God, the spirit of *Satan*, or the spirit of this world, are, and must be, the one or the other of them, the continual leader, guide, and inspirer,
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of every thing that lives in nature. The moment you cease to be moved, inspired by God, you are moved and directed by the spirit of *Satan*, or the world, or both. As creatures, who are under an absolute necessity of being under the guidance, and inspiration, of some spirit, that is greater than our own. All that is in our power, is only the choice of our leader; but led and moved we must be, and that by the spirit of God, or the spirit of fallen nature. To seek therefore to be always under the inspiration and guidance of God's Holy Spirit, and to act by an immediate power from it, is not enthusiasm, but as sober a thought, as to think of renouncing the world, and the devil. For they never can be renounced by us, but so far as the spirit of God is living, breathing, and moving in us.

Acad. You have taken from me every difficulty or perplexity that I had. It now appears to me with the utmost clearness, that to look for salvation in any thing else, but the spirit of God working in us, is to be as carnally minded, as ignorant of God, and salvation, as the Jews were, when their hearts were set upon the glory of their *Temple-service*, and a temporal Saviour to defend it, by a temporal power. For every thing but the spirit of God forming Christ in the soul, has and can have no more of salvation in it, than a temporal fighting Saviour. Upon this ground I stand in the utmost certainty, looking wholly to the spirit of God for an inward redemption from all the inward evil in that is, my fallen nature. All that I now want to know is this, what I am to do, to procure this continual operation of the spirit of God within me.

Theoph. Ask not *Academicus*, what you are to do to obtain the spirit of God; for your measure of receiving it, is just according to your faith and desire to be led by it. For to this faith, all things are possible, to which all nature, though as high as mountains, and as stiff as oaks, must yield and obey. It heals all diseases, breaks the bands of death, and calls the dead out of their graves.

It is strictly true, that man's salvation dependeth upon himself; and it is as strictly true, that *all the work* of his salvation, is *solely* the work of God in his soul. All his salvation dependeth upon himself, because his *will* has its power of motion in itself. As a will, it can only receive that which it willeth; every thing else is absolutely shut out of it. For it is the unalterable nature of the will, that it cannot possibly receive any thing into it, but that which it willeth; its willing is its only power of receiving; and therefore there can be no possible entrance for God or heaven into the soul, till the *will* of the soul desireth it; and thus all man's salvation dependeth upon himself. On the other hand, nothing can create, effect, the divine life in the soul, but that *spirit* of God, which brings forth the divine life in heaven. And thus the *work* of our salvation is wholly and solely the work of God, dwelling and operating in us. Thus, you see that God is all; that nothing but *his life* and *working-power* in us, can be our salvation; and yet that nothing but the *spirit of prayer* can make it *possible* for us to have it. And therefore neither you nor any other human soul, can be *without* the operation of the spirit of God in it, but because its *will* or its spirit of *prayer*, is turned towards something else; for we are always in union with *that*, with which our will is united. Again: Look at the light and air of this world, you see with what a freedom of communication they *overflow*, and *enliven* every thing; they enter every-where, if not hindered by *something* that withstands their entrance. This may represent to you the *ever-overflowing*, free communication of the light and spirit of God, to every human soul. They are every-where; we are encompassed with them; our souls are as near to them, as our bodies are to the light and air of this world; nothing shuts them out of us, but the will and desire of our souls, turned from them, and *praying* for something else. I say, *praying* for something else; for you are to notice this, as a certain truth, that every man's life is a *continual state* of prayer; he

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is no moment free from it, nor can possibly be so. For all our natural tempers, be they what they will, ambition, covetousness, selfishness, worldly-mindedness, pride, envy, hatred, malice, or any other lust whatever, are all of them in reality, only so many different *forms* of a *spirit of prayer*, which is as inseparable from the heart, as weight is from the body. For every natural temper is a manifestation of the desire and prayer of the heart, and shews us, how it works, and wills. And as the heart worketh, and willeth, *such*, and no other, is its prayer. All else is only *form*, and *fiction*, and empty beating of the air. If therefore the desire of the heart is not habitually turned towards God, we are necessarily in a state of prayer towards something else, that carries us from God. For this is the necessity of our nature; pray we must, as sure as we are alive; and therefore when the state of our heart is not a spirit of prayer to God, we pray *without ceasing* to some, or other part of the creation. The man whose heart habitually tends towards the riches, honours, powers, or pleasures of this life, is in a *continual* state of prayer towards all these things. His spirit stands always *bent* towards them; they have his hope, his love, his faith, and are the many Gods that he worships: And though when he is upon his knees, and uses forms of prayer, he directs them to the God of heaven; yet these are in reality the Gods of his heart, and in a sad sense of the words, he really worships them in spirit, and in truth. Hence you may see, how it comes to pass, that there is so much praying, and yet so little true piety amongst us. The *bells* are daily calling us to church, our *closets* abound with *manuals* of devotion, yet how little fruit! It is all for this reason, because our prayers are not *our own*; they are not the abundance of *our own* heart; are not *found* and *felt* within us, as we feel our own hunger and thirst; but are only so many *borrowed forms* of speech, which we use at certain times, and occasions. And therefore it is no wonder that little good comes of it. What benefit could it have been

to the *Pharisee*, if, with an heart inwardly full of its own pride and self-exaltation, he had outwardly hung down his head, smote upon his breast, and borrowed the *Publican's* words, *God be merciful to me a sinner*? What greater good can be expected from our saying the words of *David*, or singing his psalms seven times a day, if our heart hath no more of the spirit of *David* in it, than the heart of the *Pharisee* had, of the spirit of the humble *Publican*?

Acad. O *Theophilus*, I consent to what you say; and yet I am afraid of following you: For you seem to condemn forms of prayer in public, and *manuals* of devotion in private.

Theoph. Dear *Academicus*, abate your fright. Can you think, that I am against your praying in the words of *David*, or breathing his spirit in your prayers, or that I would censure your singing his psalms seven times a day? At three several times we are told, our Lord prayed, repeating the *same form of words*; and therefore a set form of words are not only consistent with, but may be highly suitable to, the most divine spirit of prayer. If your own heart, for days and weeks, are unable to alter, or break off from inwardly thinking and saying, *Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done*; if at other times, it stood always inwardly in another form of prayer, saying, *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, with all thy holy nature, spirit, and tempers, into my soul; that I may be born again of thee, a new creature*; I should be so far from censuring this, that I should say, Blessed are they whose hearts are tied to such a form of words. It is not therefore a set form that is spoken against, but an *heartless* form, a form that has no relation to, or correspondence with, the state of the heart that uses it. All that I have said is only to teach you the true nature of prayer, that it is the work of the heart, and that the heart only prays in reality (whatever its words are) for that which it habitually *wills, likes, loves, and longs* to have. It is not therefore the using the words of *David*, or any other saint, in your prayers, that is censured, but the using them without that state of heart, which first spake them forth;

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and the trusting to them, because they are a good form; though in our hearts we have nothing that is like them. It would be good to say incessantly with holy David, *My heart is athirst for God. — As the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God.* But there is no goodness in saying daily these words, if no *such thirst* is felt, in the heart. And, you may easily know, that numbers of repeated forms, keep men content with their state, because they make use of such holy prayers; though their hearts, from morning to night, are in a state quite contrary to them, and join no farther in them, than in liking to use them at certain times.

Acad. I acquiesce, *Theophilus*, in the truth of what you have said, and plainly see the necessity of condemning what you have condemned; which is not the form, but the *heartless* form. But still I have a scruple upon me: I shall be almost afraid of going to church, where there are so many good prayers offered up to God, as suspecting they may not be the language of my own heart, and so become only a *lip-labour*.

Theoph. I do not dislike your scruple at all; you do well to be afraid of saying any thing to God, which your heart does not truly say. It is also good for you to think, that many of the prayers of the church may go higher, than your heart can go along with them. For this will put you upon a right care over yourself, so to live, that, as a true son of your mother the church, your heart may be able to speak her language, and find delight in the spirit of her prayers. But this will only then come to pass, when the spirit of prayer is the spirit of your heart; then every good word, whether in a form, or out of a form, will be as suitable to your heart, as gratifying to it, as food is to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty soul. But till the spirit of the heart is thus renewed, till it is *emptied* of all earthly desires, and stands in an *habitual* hunger and thirst after God (which is the true spirit of prayer) all our forms of prayer will be, more or less, but too much like *lessons* that

that are given to *scholars*. But be not discouraged, *Academicus*; take the following advice, and you may go to church without any danger of a mere lip-labour; although there should be a *psalm*, or a *prayer*, whose language is higher than that of your own heart. Do this: Go to the church, as the *Publican* went into the temple; stand *inwardly* in the spirit of your mind, in that *form* which he outwardly expressed, when he cast down his eyes, smote upon his breast, and could only say, God be merciful to me a sinner! Stand unchangably (at least in your desire) in *this form* and state of heart; it will sanctify every petition that comes out of your mouth; and when any thing is read, or sung, or prayed, that is more exalted than your heart is, if you make this an occasion of a farther *sinking down* in the spirit of the *Publican*, you will then be helped, and highly blessed, by those prayers and praises, which seem only to fit, a better heart than yours.

This, my friend, will help you to reap where you have not sown, and be a continual source of grace in your soul. This will not only help you to receive good from those prayers, which seem too good for the state of your heart, but will help you to find good from every thing else: For every thing that inwardly stirs in you, or outwardly happens to you, becomes a real good to you, if it either finds or excites in you this humble form of mind: For nothing is in vain, or without profit, to the humble soul; like the bee, it takes its honey even from bitter herbs; it stands always in a state of divine growth; and every thing that falls upon it, is like a dew of heaven to it. Shut up yourself therefore in this humility, all good is inclosed in it. Let it be as a garment wherewith you are always covered, and the girdle with which you are girt; breathe nothing but in and from its spirit; see nothing but with its eyes; hear nothing but with its ears: And then, whether you are in the church, or out of the church; hearing the praises of God, or receiving wrongs from men; all will be edification, and

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every thing will help forward your growth in the life of God.

Acad. Indeed, *Theophilus*, this answer to my scruple is good. All my desire now is, to live no longer to the world, to myself, my natural tempers and passions, but wholly to the will of the blessed and adorable God.

Theoph. This resolution, *Academicus*, only shews that you are just come to yourself; for every thing short of this earnest desire to live wholly unto God, may be called a most dreadful insatiation or madness, and insensibility that cannot be described. For what else is our life, but a *trial* for the greatest evil, or good that an eternity can give us? What can be so dreadful, as to die possessed of a wicked immortal nature, or to go out of this world with tempers, that must keep us for ever miserable? What has God not done to prevent this? His redeeming love began with our fall, and calls every man to salvation, and every man is forced to hear, though he will not obey his voice. God has so loved the world, that his only son hung and expired, bleeding on the cross for us. Are we yet sons of pride, and led away with vanity? Do the powers of darkness rule over us? Do evil spirits possess and drive on our lives? Is remorse of conscience no longer felt? Are falsehood, guile, debauchery, profaneness, perjury, bribery, corruption, and adultery, no longer seeking to hide themselves in corners, but openly entering into all our high places, giving battle to every virtue, and laying claim to the government of the world? Are we thus near being swallowed up by a deluge of vice and impiety? All this is not come upon us, because God has left us without help from heaven, or exposed us to the powers of hell; but because we have rejected and despised the *whole mystery* of our salvation, and trampled under foot the precious blood of Christ, which alone has that omnipotence, that can either bring heaven into us, or drive hell out of us. O *Britain, Britain*, think that the Son of God saith unto thee, as he said, O *Jerusalem*,

Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. And now let me say, What aileth thee, O British earth, that thou quakest, and the foundations of thy churches that they totter ? Just that same aileth thee, as ailed Judah's earth, when the divine Saviour of the world, dying on the cross, was reviled, scorned, and mocked, by the inhabitants of Jerusalem ; then the earth quaked, the rocks rent, and the sun refused to give its light. Nature again declares for God, the earth and the elements can no longer bear our sins : Jerusalem's doom for Jerusalem's sin, may well be feared by us. Oh ye miserable pens dipt in Satan's ink, that dare to publish the folly of believing in Jesus Christ, where will you hide your guilty heads, when nature dissolved, shall shew you the rainbow, on which the crucified Saviour shall sit in judgment, and every work receive its reward ? O tremble ! ye apostate sons, that come out of the schools of Christ, to fight Lucifer's battles, and do that for him, which neither he, nor his legions can do for themselves. Their inward pride, malice and rage against God, and Christ, and human nature, have no pens but yours, no apostles but you. They must be forced to work in the dark, to steal privately into impure hearts, could they not beguile you into a fond belief, that you are lovers of truth, friends of reason, detectors of fraud, great genius's, and moral philosophers, merely, because ye blaspheme Christ, and the gospel of God. Poor deluded souls, rescued from hell by the blood of Christ, called by God to possess the thrones of fallen angels, permitted to live only by the mercy of God, that ye may be born again, my heart bleeds for you. Think, I beseech you, in time, what mercies ye are trampling under your feet. Say not that reason, and your intellectual faculties, stand in your way ; that these are the best gifts, which God has given you, and that these suffer you not to come to Christ. All this is as vain a pretence, and as gross a mistake, as if ye were to say, that you had nothing but your feet to carry you to heaven. For your heart

is the best and greatest *gift* of God to you ; it is the highest, greatest, and noblest *power* of your nature ; it forms your whole life, be it what it will ; all evil and all good comes from it ; your heart alone has the key of life and death ; it does all that it will ; reason is but its *play-thing*, and whether in time or eternity, can only be a *mere beholder* of the wonders of happiness, or *forms* of misery, which the right or wrong working of the heart has caused.

I will give you a touch-stone. Offer as continually as you can, this following form of prayer to God. Offer it frequently on your knees ; but, whether sitting, standing, or walking, be always inwardly longing, and earnestly praying this *one prayer* to God : “ That, of his great goodness, he would make known to you, and take from your heart, every *kind*, and *form*, and *degree* of pride, whether it be from evil spirits, or your own corrupt nature ; and that he would awaken in you the *depth* and *truth* of all that humility, which can make you capable of his light and holy spirit.” Reject every thought, but that of wishing, and praying in this manner from the bottom of your heart, with such truth and earnestness, as people in torment, wish and pray to be delivered from it. Now if ye dare not, if your hearts will not, cannot give themselves up in this manner to the spirit of this prayer, then the *touch-stone* has done its work, and ye may be as fully assured, both what your infidelity is, and from what it proceeds, as ye can be of the plainest truth in nature. This will shew you, how vainly you appeal to your *reason*, as the cause of your infidelity ; that it is full as false and absurd, as if *thieves* and *adulterers* should say, that their theft and adultery was entirely owing to their bodily eyes, which shewed them external objects, and not to any thing that was *wrong* in their hearts. On the other hand, if you can, and will give yourselves up in *sincerity* to this spirit of prayer, I will venture to affirm, that if ye had twice as many evil spirits in you, as *Mary Magdalene* had, they will all be cast out of you, and ye will be forced with

with her, to weep with tears of love, at the feet of the holy Jesus.

But here, my friends, I stop, that we may return to the matter we had in hand.

Rust. You have made no digression *Theophilus*, from our main point, which was to recommend Christianity to poor *Humanus*. He must, I am sure, have felt the death-blows, that you have here given to the infidel scheme. Their idol of reason, which is the vain God they worship, is here like *Dagon* fallen to the ground. *Humanus* is caught by your bait of love, and I dare say wants only to have this conversation ended, that he may try himself, by this divine touch-stone, which you have put into his hands.

Acad. Give me leave, gentlemen, to add one word. *Theophilus* has fairly pulled reason out of its usurped throne, and shewn it to be a powerless, idle toy, when compared to the royal strength of the heart, which is the kingly power, that has all the government of life in its hands.

But now, *Theophilus*, I beg we may return to that very point concerning prayer, where we left off. I think my heart is entirely devoted to God; and that I desire nothing but to live in such a state of prayer as may best keep me under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. Assist me therefore, in this important matter; give me the fullest directions that you can; and if you have any manual of devotion, that you prefer, or any method that you would put me in, pray let me know it.

Rust. I beg leave to speak a word to *Academicus*. Ask not *Academicus*, for a book of prayers; but ask your heart what is within it, what it feels, how it stirs, what it wants, what it would have altered, what it desires; and then, instead of calling upon *Theophilus* for assistance, stand in the same form of petition to God.

For this turning to God according to the inward feeling, want, and motion of your own heart, in love, in trust of having from him all that you want, and

wish, is the best form of prayer in the world.— Now no man can be ignorant of the state of his own heart, or a stranger to those tempers, that are stirring in him; and what should be the form of his prayer, but that which the state of his heart demands? If you know of no trouble, feel no burden, want nothing to be altered, or removed, nothing to be increased or strengthened in you, how can you pray for any thing of this kind? But if your heart knows its own plague, feels its inward evil, knows what it wants to have removed, will you not let your distress form the manner of your prayer? Or will you pray in a form of words, that have no more agreement with your state, than if a man walking above-ground, should beg every man he met, to pull him out of a deep pit? For prayers not formed according to the *real state* of your heart, are but like a prayer to be pulled out of a deep well, when you are not in it. Hence you may see, how unreasonable it is to make a mystery of prayer, or an art, that needs so much instruction; since every man is, and only can be, directed by his own inward state, and condition, when, and how, and what he is to pray for, as every man's outward state shews him what he outwardly wants.

Acad. I did not imagine, *Rusticus*, that you would have so openly declared against *manuals* of devotion, since you know not only the most learned, but the most pious doctors of the church, consider them as necessary helps to devotion.

Rust. If you was obliged to go a long journey on foot, and yet through a weakness in your legs could not set one foot before another, you would do well to get the best travelling crutches that you could.

But if, with sound and good legs, you would not stir one step, till you had got *crutches* to hop with; surely a man might shew you the folly of not walking with your own legs, without being thought an enemy to crutches, or the makers of them. Now a *manual* is not so good an help, as *crutches*, and yet
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you see crutches are only proper, when our legs cannot do their office. It is, I say, not so good an help as crutches, because that which you do with the crutches, is that very same thing, that you should have done with your legs: you *really* travel; but when the heart cannot take one step in prayer, and you therefore read your manual, you do not do that very same thing, which your heart should have done, that is, *really* pray. A fine manual therefore is not to be considered as a means of praying, or as something that puts you in a state of prayer, as crutches help you to travel; but its chief use to a dead and hardened heart, that has no prayer of its own, is to shew it, what a *state* and *spirit* of prayer it *wants*, and at what a sad distance it is from feeling all that variety of humble, penitent, grateful, fervent, resigned, loving sentiments, which are described in the manual, that so, being touched with a view of its own miserable state, it may begin its own prayer to God for help. But I have done. *Theophilus* may now answer your earnest request.

Theoph. Your earnest desire, *Academicus*, to live in the spirit of prayer, and be truly governed by it, is a most excellent desire; for to be a man of prayer is that which the apostle means by *living in the spirit, and having our conversation in heaven*. It is to have done, not only with the confessed vices, but with the allowed follies and vanities of this world. To tell such a soul of the innocency of levity, that it need not run away from idle discourse, vain gait, and trifling mirth, as being the harmless relief of our heavy natures, is like telling the flame, that it need not ascend upwards. But here you are to observe, that this spirit of prayer is not to be taught you by a book, or brought into you by an art from without; but must arise from within, from the *painful* sense and feeling of what you are. And its first prayer is nothing else but a sense of penitence, self-condemnation, confession, and humility. It feels nothing but its own misery, and
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so is all humility. This prayer of humility is met by the divine love, the mercifulness of God embraces it; and then its prayer is changed into hymns, and songs, and thanksgivings. When this state of fervour has done its work, has melted away all earthly passions and affections, and left no inclination in the soul, but to delight in God alone, then its prayer changes again. It is now come so near to God, has found such union with him, that it does not so much pray as live in God. Its prayer is not any particular faculty, not confined to times, or words, or place, but is the work of his whole being, which continually stands in fulness of faith, in purity of love, in absolute resignation, to do, and be, what and how his Beloved pleaseth. This is the last state of the spirit of prayer, and is its highest union with God in this life. Each of these states has its time, its variety of workings, its trials, temptations, and purifications, which can only be known by experience in the passage through them. The *one infallible* way to go safely through all the difficulties, trials, temptations, or opposition, of our own evil tempers is this: To expect nothing from ourselves, to trust to nothing in ourselves, but in every thing expect, and depend upon God. Keep fast hold of this thread, and then let your way be what it will, darkness, temptation, or the rebellion of nature, you will be led through all, to an union with God: For nothing hurts us in any state, but an expectation of something in it, and from it, which we should only expect from God. We are looking for our own virtue, our *own* piety, our *own* goodness, and so live on and on in our *own* poverty and weakness; to-day pleased and comforted with the seeming strength and firmness of our own pious tempers; to-morrow, fallen into our own mire, we are dejected, but not humbled; we grieve, but it is only the grief of pride, at seeing our perfection not to be such as we vainly imagined. And thus it will be, till the *whole turn* of our minds is so changed, that we as fully see and know our inability to have any

any goodness of our own, as to have a life of our own.

When we are brought to this conviction, then we have done with all thought of being our own builders; the whole spirit of our mind is become a mere *faith*, and *hope*, and *trust* in the sole operation of God's spirit, looking no more to any other power, to become new creatures, than we look to any other power for the resurrection of our bodies at the last day. Hence may be seen, that the trials of every state are its greatest blessings; they do that for us, which we most of all want to have done, they force us to know our own *nothingness*, and the *all* of God.

The soul is always safe in every state, if it makes every thing an occasion either of rising up, or falling down into the hands of God, and exercising faith, and trust, and resignation to him. And therefore the pious soul that eyes only God, that means nothing but being his alone, can have no stop put to its progress; joy and heaviness equally assist him; in the joy he looks up to God; in the heaviness he lays hold on God, and so they both do him the same good.

The best instruction that I can give you, as preparatory to the spirit of prayer, is already fully given, where we have set forth the original perfection, the miserable fall, and the glorious redemption of man. It is the true knowledge of these great things that can do all for you, which human instruction can do. These things must fill you with a dislike of your present state, and create an earnest longing after your first perfection. For prayer cannot be taught you, by giving you a book of prayers, but by awakening in you a sense of what you are, and what you should be; that so you may see, and know, and feel, what things you want, and are to pray for. For a man does not, cannot pray for any thing, because a fine petition for it is put into his hands, but because his *own* condition is a *reason* and *motive* for his asking for it. And therefore it is, that
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this tract began with a discovery of these high and important matters, at the sight of which the world, and all that is in it, shrinks into nothing, and every thing past, present, and to come, awakens in our hearts a continual prayer, and longing desire, after God, and eternity.

Acad But surely you do not take this to be right in general, that the common people, who are mostly of low understandings, should kneel down in private, without any form of prayer, saying only what comes into their own heads.

Theoph. It would be wrong to condemn a manual *such*, or to say that none ought to make use of it: But it cannot be wrong, to shew, that prayer is the natural language of the heart, and *such*, does not want any form or borrowed words. Now all that has been said of manuals of prayers, only amounts to thus much; that they are not necessary, nor the most natural and excellent way of praying. If they happen to be necessary to any person, it is because the natural prayer of his heart is already engaged, loving, wishing, and longing after, the things of this life; which makes him so insensible of his spiritual wants, so blind and dead as to the things of God, that he cannot pray for them, but so far as the words of the other people are put into his mouth.

But when a man has had so much benefit from the gospel, as to know his own want of a Redeemer, who he is, and how he is to be found; there every thing seems to be done, both to awaken and direct his prayer, and make it a true praying in and by the spirit. For when the heart really pants after God, its prayer is a praying, as moved by the Spirit of God; it is the breath or inspiration of God, stirring, moving, and opening itself in the heart. Nothing can have the least desire to ascend to heaven, but that which came down from heaven; and therefore nothing in the heart can pray, and long after God, but the Spirit of God moving and stirring in it. Every breath therefore of the true spirit of prayer, is nothing else but the Spirit of God, breathing,

ing, inspiring, and moving the heart, in all its variety of motions and affections, towards God. And therefore every time a good desire stirs in the heart, a good prayer goes out of it, that reaches God, as being the fruit and work of his holy spirit. When any man, feeling his corruption, looks up to God, with desire to be delivered from it, whether with words or without words, how can he pray better? What need of any change of thoughts, or words, or any variety of expressions, when the one desire of his heart made known to God, and continued in, is not only all, but the most perfect prayer he can make? Again, suppose the soul in another state, feeling with joy its offered Redeemer, and opening its heart for the full reception of him; if it stands in this state of wishing and longing for Christ, how can its prayer be in an higher degree?

Or if it breaks out frequently in these words, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly; with all thy holy nature, spirit, and tempers into my soul*, is there any occasion to enlarge or alter these words into another form or expression? Can he do better, or pray more, than by continually standing from time to time in this state of wishing for Christ? Nay, is it not likely, that his heart should be more divided and dissipated by a numerous change of expressions, than by keeping united to one expression that sets forth all that he wants? For it is the reality, the steadiness, and continuance of the desire, that is the goodness of prayer. Our Lord said to one that came to him, *What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?* He answered, *Lord, that I may receive my sight*: and he received it. Another said, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*: and he was cleansed. Tell me what learning, or fine parts, are required to make such prayers as these? And yet what wonders of relief are recorded in scripture, as given to such short prayers as these! And what blessing may not now be obtained in the same way, and with as few words? Every man therefore that has any feeling of the weight of his sin, or any desire to be

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be delivered from it by Christ, has learning and capacity enough to make his own prayer. For praying is not speaking eloquently, but simply, the true desire of the heart; and the heart, simple and plain in good desires, is in the truest preparation for all the gifts of God. And the most simple souls, that have accustomed themselves to speak their own desires and wants to God, in such short, but true breathings of their hearts, will soon know more of prayer, than any persons who have only their knowledge from learning, and learned books.

And yet it is not either silence, or a simple petition, or a great variety of outward expressions, that alters the nature of prayer, or makes it to be good or better, but only and solely the reality, steadiness, and continuance of the desire; and therefore whether a man offer this desire to God in the silent longing of the heart, or in simple short petitions, or in a great variety of words, is of no consequence; but all are equally good, when the true and right state of the heart is with them.

All that I have said of prayer, has been only to this end; to shew its real nature; whence it is to arise; where it is to be found: and how you are to begin, and become a true proficient in it. If, therefore, you was at present to look no farther, than how to begin to practise a prayer proceeding from your heart, and continue in it, leaving all that you are farther to know of prayer, to be known in its time by experience; this would be much better for you, than to be asking before-hand about such things, as are not your immediate concern.

Begin to be a man of prayer, in this easy, simple, and natural manner, that has been set before you; and when you are faithful to this method, you will then need no other instructor in the art of prayer. Your own heart thus turned to God will want no one to tell it, when it should be simple in its petitions, or various in its expressions: or prostrate itself in silence before God. But this hastiness of knowing things, before they belong to us, is very common. Thus a

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man that has but just entered upon the reformation of his life, shall want to read or hear a discourse upon *perfection*, whether it be attainable or not; and shall be more eager after what he can hear of this, though at such a distance, than of such things as concern the next step he is to take.

You, my friend, have taken the *first step** in the spiritual life; you have devoted yourself absolutely to God, to live wholly to his will, under the light and guidance of his Holy Spirit, intending, seeking nothing in this world, but such a passage through it, as may tend to the glory of God, and the recovery of your own fallen soul. Your *next step* is, looking to the continuance of this resolution, and donation of yourself to God, to see that it be kept alive, that every thing you do may be animated and directed by it, and all the occurrences of every day, from morning to night, be received by you, as becomes a spirit that is devoted to God. Now this *second step* cannot be taken, but purely by prayer; nothing else has the least power here but prayer; I do not mean you must frequently read or say a number of prayers (though this in its turn may be good and useful to you) but the prayer I mean, and which you must practise, if you would take this *second step* in the spiritual life, is *prayer of the heart*, or a prayer of your own, proceeding from the state of your heart, and its own tendency to God. Of all things therefore look to this prayer of the heart; consider it as your infallible guide to heaven; turn from every thing that is an hindrance of it, that quenches or abates its fervour; love and like nothing but that which is suitable to it; and let every day begin, go on, and end, in the spirit of it. Consider yourself, as having gone aside, and lost your right path, when any *delight*, *desire*, or *trouble*, is suffered to live in you, that cannot be made a part of this prayer of the heart to God. For nothing so infallibly shews us the true state of our heart, as that which gives us either delight or trouble; for as our delight and trouble is, so is the

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* Surely, one of the *last steps*.

state of our heart: if therefore you are carried away with any trouble or delight, that has not relation to your progress in the divine life, you may be assured your heart is not in its right state of prayer to God. Look at a man who is devoted to some *one thing*, or has some one great worldly matter at heart; he stands turned from every thing that has not some relation to it; he has no joy or trouble but what ariseth from it; he has no eyes or ears, but to see or hear something about it. All else is a trifle, but that which some way or other concerns this great matter. You need not tell him of any rules or methods to keep it in his thoughts; it goes with him into all places and companies; it has his first thoughts in the morning; and every day is good or bad, as this great matter seems to succeed or not. This may shew you how easily, how naturally, how constantly, our heart will carry on its own state of prayer, as soon as God is its great object, or it is wholly given up to him. This may also shew you, that the heart cannot fully enter into the spirit of prayer, till it takes God for its *all*, or gives itself up *wholly* to God. But when this foundation is laid, the seed of prayer is sown, and the heart is in a continual state of tendency to God; having no other delight or trouble in things of any kind, but as they help or hinder its union with God. Therefore, the way to be a man of prayer, and be governed by its spirit, is not to get a *book* full of prayers; but the best help you can have from a book, is to read one full of such truths, and awakening informations, as force you to see and know *who*, and *what*, and *where*, you are; that God is your all; and that all is misery, but a heart and life devoted to him. This is the best outward prayer-book you can have, as it will turn you to an inward book, and spirit of prayer in your heart, which is a continual longing desire of the heart after God. When, for the sake of this inward prayer, you retire at any time of the day, never begin till you know and feel, why and wherefore you are going to pray; and let this *why* and *wherefore*, form and direct every thing that comes from you, whether it be in thought
or

or word. As you know your own state, so it must be the easiest thing in the world to look up to God, with such desires as suit the state you are in; and praying in this manner, whether it be in one, or more, or no words, your prayer will be always highly beneficial to you.—Thus praying, you can never pray in vain; but one month in the practise of it, will do you more good, make a greater change in your soul, than twenty years of prayer only by books, and forms of other peoples making.

No vice can harbour in you, no good desire languish, when once your heart is in this method of prayer; never beginning to pray, till you first see how matters stand with you; asking your heart what it wants, and having nothing in your prayers, but what the known state of your heart puts you upon *demanding, saying, or offering*, unto God. Such a prayer, gives new life and growth to all your virtues; whereas, overlooking this true prayer of your own heart, and only at certain times taking a prayer that you find in a book, you have nothing to wonder at, if you are every day praying, and yet every day sinking farther under your infirmities. For your life can only be altered by that which is the real working of your heart. And if your prayer is only a form of words, made by the skill of other people, such a prayer can no more change you into a good man, than an *actor* upon the stage, who speaks king-ly language, is thereby made a king. Again, another great and infallible benefit of this kind of prayer is this; it is the only way to be delivered from the deceitfulness of your own hearts.

Our hearts deceive us, because we are absent from them, taken up in outward things, in outward rules and forms of living and praying. But this kind of praying, which takes all its thoughts from the state of our hearts, makes it impossible for us to be strangers to ourselves. The strength of every sin, the power of every evil temper, the most secret working of our hearts, the weakness of any or all our virtues, is seen with a noon-day clearness, as soon as the

heart is made our prayer-book, and we pray for nothing, but according to what we read, and find there.

Acad. O *Theophilus*, you have shewn me, that the best prayer in the world, is that which the heart sends forth from itself. And yet I am not free from suspicions about it: I apprehend it to be that very *praying by the spirit*, or as *moved by the spirit*, or from a *light within*, which is condemned as *quakerism*.

Theoph. There is but one good prayer that you can possibly make; and that is a prayer as the spirit of God *moves* you in it, or to it. This alone, is a divine prayer; no other prayer can possibly have any communion with God. Therefore to ridicule *praying by the spirit*, or as *moved by the spirit*, is ridiculing the *only* prayer that is divine, and to reject and oppose it, as a vain conceit, is to quench, and suppress all that is holy, heavenly, and divine, within us. For if this Holy spirit does not live, and move in us, and bring forth all the *praying affections* of our souls, we may as well think of reaching heaven with our hands, as with our prayers.

Earnestly therefore to pray, humbly to hope, and faithfully to expect, to be continually inspired, and animated by the Holy Spirit of God, has no more of *vanity*, *sanaticism*, or *enthusiastic wildness* in it, than to hope and pray, to act in every thing from and by a good spirit. For as sure as the lip of truth hath told us, that there is but *one that is good*, so sure is it, that not a *spark* of goodness, nor a *breath* of piety, can be in any creature, either in heaven, or on earth, but by that divine spirit. The matter is not about *forms* of virtue, *rules* of religion, or a *prudential piety*, suited to time, and place, and character; all these are degrees of goodness that our old man can as easily trade in, as in any other matters of this world. But so much as we have of an heavenly and divine goodness, so much we must have of a *divine inspiration* in us. For as nothing can fall to the earth, but because it has the nature of the earth in it: so nothing can ascend towards heaven, or unite with it, but
that

that very spirit which came down from heaven and has the nature of heaven in it. This truth therefore, that the kingdom of God is within us, and that its spirit is the spirit of God, stands upon a rock, against which all attempts are in vain. But how shall I know when, and how far, I am led and governed by the Spirit of God?

Theoph. "God is unwearied *patience*, a *meekness* that cannot be provoked; he is an ever enduring *mercifulness*; he is unmixed *goodness*, impartial, universal love; his delight is in the communication of himself, his own happiness to every thing, according to its capacity. He does every thing that is good, righteous, and lovely, for its own sake, because it is good, righteous, and lovely. He is the good from which nothing but good cometh, and resisteth all evil, only with goodness," This is the *nature and spirit* of God, and hereby you may know, whether you are moved, and led by the Spirit of God. Here is a proof that is always at hand. If it be the earnest desire, and longing of your heart, to be *merciful* as he is merciful; to be full of his *unwearied patience*, to dwell in his *unalterable meekness*; if you long to be like him in *universal, impartial love*; if you desire to communicate *every good*, to every creature that you are able; if you love and practise every thing that is good, righteous, and lovely, for its own sake, because it is good, righteous, and lovely; and resist no evil, but with *goodness*; then you have the utmost certainty, that the Spirit of God liveth, dwelleth, and governeth in you. But if you want any of these tempers, at least if the whole bent of your heart, and mind is not set upon them, all pretences to an *immediate inspiration*, and continual operation of the Spirit of God are vain. Where his spirit dwells and governs, there all these tempers spring, as the certain fruits of it. Therefore keep but within the bounds here set you; and you may safely say, with St. John, *Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us.*

Acad. But surely the Spirit of God often discovers itself, and operates in very extraordinary ways,

in uncommon illuminations and openings of divine light and knowledge, in strong impulses and sallies of a wonderful zeal, full of the highest gifts and graces of God: And these have frequently been God's gracious methods of awakening a sinful world.

Theoph. What you say, *Academicus*, is very true; and almost every age of the church is a sufficient proof of it.

But would you know the *sublime*, the *exalted*, the *angelic*, in the Christian life, see what the Son of God saith; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself. On these two, saith he, hang all the law and the prophets.* And without these *two things*, no good light ever can arise, or enter into your soul. Take all the sciences, shine in all the accomplishments of the lettered world, they will only lead you from one vain passion to another; every thing you send out from within you is selfish, vain, and bad; every thing you see or receive from without, will be received with a bad spirit; till these *two* heavenly tempers have overcome the *natural perverseness* of fallen nature. Till then, nothing *pure* can proceed from within, nor any thing be received in *purity* from without.

Think yourself therefore incapable of judging rightly, or acting virtuously, till these two tempers have the government of your heart. Then every truth will meet you; no hurtful error can get entrance into your heart; but you will have a better knowledge of all divine matters, than all human learning can help you to.

in numerous illustrations and openings of divine
light and knowledge, in strong impulses and labors
of a wonderful soul, full of the highest gifts and
graces of God. And these have frequently been
God's gracious methods of awakening a heart
which was dead.



But would you know the power of the Gospel
in the Christian life? For when the Son of
God came, He came to save the world, and to
bring out of the darkness into the light, and to
give life to all who believe in Him. He came
to give us the life of God, and to make us
partakers of His glory. He came to give us
the love of God, and to make us love Him
and our fellow-men. He came to give us
the peace of God, and to make us at peace
with Him and with our fellow-men. He came
to give us the joy of God, and to make us
joyful in Him and in His promises. He came
to give us the power of God, and to make us
able to overcome all our enemies. He came
to give us the wisdom of God, and to make us
able to understand His will and His ways. He
came to give us the knowledge of God, and to
make us able to know Him as He is, and as
He is known by His people. He came to give
us the life of God, and to make us partakers
of His glory. He came to give us the love of
God, and to make us love Him and our fellow-
men. He came to give us the peace of God, and
to make us at peace with Him and with our
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is known by His people.

AN

EXTRACT

FROM

Mr. LAW's

Spirit of LOVE.

PART I.





A N

E X T R A C T, &c.

My Dear Friend,

YOU had no occasion to make any apology for the manner of your letter to me ; for though you very well know, that I have as utter an aversion to waste my time and thoughts in matters of theological debate, as in any contentions merely of a worldly nature, as knowing that the former are generally as much, if not more, hurtful to the heart of man than the latter ; yet as your objections rather tend to stir up the powers of love, than the wrangle of debate ; so I consider them only as occasions of edifying both you and myself with the divine blessedness, of the *Spirit of love*.

You say, “ There is nothing in my writings that has more affected you than that spirit of love that breathes in them ; and that you wish for nothing so much as to have a living sensibility of the power, life, and religion, of love. But you have an objection often rising in your mind, that this doctrine of pure and universal love may be too refined and imaginary ; because you find, that however you like it, yet you cannot attain to it.”

Thus stands your objection, which will fall into nothing, as soon as you look at it from a right point of view : Which will be, as soon as you have found the true ground of the nature and necessity, of the blessed spirit of love.

Now,

Now, the spirit of love has this original. God, as considered in himself, before any thing is brought forth by him, is only an *eternal will to all goodness*. This is the *one eternal immutable* God, that from eternity to eternity changeth not, that can be neither more nor less, nor any thing else, but an *eternal will to all the goodness* that is in himself, and can come from him. The creation of ever so many creatures, adds nothing to, nor takes any thing from, this immutable God: He always was, and always will be, the same immutable will to all goodness. So that as certainly as he is the creator, so certainly is he the blefser of every created thing, and can give *nothing* but blessing, and happiness, from himself, because he has in *himself* nothing else to give. It is much more possible for the sun to give forth darkness, than for God to be, or give forth, any thing but blessing and goodness. Now this is the *ground and original* of the spirit of love in the creature; it is and must be a *will to all goodness*, and you have not this *spirit of love* but so far as you have this will to all goodness at all times, and on all occasions. You may indeed do many works of love, especially at such times as they are not inconvenient to you. Yet the spirit of love is not in you, but so far as it is the spirit of your life, as you live *freely, willingly, and universally*, according to it. For every spirit acts with freedom and universality according to what it is. It needs no command to be what it is, no more than you need bid wrath be wrathful. And therefore when *love* is the spirit of your life, it will have freedom and universality; it will always live and work in love, not because of *this or that. here or there*, but because the spirit of love can only love, where-ever it is or goes, or whatever is done to it. As the *sparks* know no motion, but that of flying upwards, whether it be in the darkness of the night, or in the light of the day; so the spirit of love is always in the same course; it knows no difference of time, place, or persons; but whether it *gives or forgives, bears or forbears*, it is equally doing its own delightful

ful work, equally blessed from itself. For the spirit of love, where-ever it is, is its own blessing and happiness, is in the same joy, and is the same good to itself, every-where, and on every occasion.

Oh! Sir, would you know the blessing of all blessings, it is the *God of love* dwelling in your soul, and killing every root of bitterness which is the pain and torment of every earthly love. For all wants are satisfied, all disorders are removed, no life is any longer a burden, every day is a day of peace, every thing you meet becomes a help to you, because every thing you see or do is all done in sweet, gentle love. For as love has no by-ends, wills nothing but its own increase, so every thing is as oil to its flame; it must have that which it wills, and cannot be disappointed, because every thing naturally helps it to live in its own way. The spirit of love does not want to be honoured, or esteemed; its only desire is to propagate itself, and become the blessing and happiness of every thing that wants it. And therefore it meets wrath, and evil, and hatred, and opposition, with the same *one will*, as the light meets the darkness, only to overcome it with all its blessings. Did you want to avoid the ill-will, or to gain the favour, of any persons, you might easily miss of your ends; but if you have no will but to all goodness, every thing you meet, must be assistant to you. For the wrath of an enemy, the treachery of a friend, and every other evil, only helps the spirit of love to be more triumphant, to find all its blessings in a higher degree. Whether therefore you consider *perfection* or *happiness*, it is all included in the spirit of love, and must be so, because the infinitely perfect and happy God is mere love, an unchangeable will to all goodness; and therefore every creature must be corrupt and unhappy, so far as it is led by any other will. Thus you see the ground of the spirit of love. Let me now, shew you the necessity of it: No creature can have any union or communion with the deity, but so far as its life is a spirit of love. This is the one band of union

union betwixt God and the creature. All besides this, call it by what name you will, is only so much error, and corruption, got into the creature; and must be entirely separated from it, before it can see God, or find the divine life. For as God is an *immutable will* to all goodness, so the divine will can unite with no creatures will, but that which will-eth with him that which is good. Here the necessity is absolute; nothing will do instead of this will; all contrivances of holiness, all forms of religious piety, signify nothing without this will to all goodness. For as the will to all goodness is the *whole nature* of God, so it must be the *whole nature* of every service, that can be acceptable to him. And therefore every thing that followeth our *own will*, forsaketh the *one will* to all goodness. The necessity therefore of the *spirit of love*, is what God himself cannot dispense with in the creature, no more than he can deny himself, or act contrary to his own holy being. But as it was his *will to all goodness*, that brought forth angels, and the spirits of men, so he can will nothing in their existence, but that they should live and work, and manifest that same spirit of love and goodness which brought them into being. Every thing therefore, but the *will to goodness*, is some degree of *apostasy*, yea, rebellion against the *whole nature* of God.

There is no peace, nor ever can be, for the soul of man, but in the purity and perfection of its first-created nature; nor can it have its purity and perfection in any other way, than in and by the *spirit of love*. For love is the purity, the perfection, of all created things; and nothing can live in God but as it lives in love. Look at every vice, pain, and disorder, in human nature, it is in itself nothing but the spirit of the creature turned from the *universality* of love to some *self-seeking* in created things. So that love alone is, the cure of every evil; and he that lives in the purity of love, is risen out of the power of evil, into the freedom of the one spirit of heaven. The *schools* have given us very accurate defini-

tions

tions of every vice, whether it be covetousness, pride, wrath, or envy, and shewn us how to conceive them as notionally distinguished from one another. But the Christian has a much shorter way of knowing them, and what they all are, and do, in himself. For, call them by what names you will, they are all, that *same one* thing, and all do that *same one work*, as the Scribes, the Pharisees, and rabble of the *Jews*, who crucified Christ, were all but *one and the same thing*, and all did *one and the same work*, however different they were in outward names. If you would therefore have a true sense of the nature and power of pride, wrath, covetousness, envy, they are in their whole nature nothing else but the *murderers and crucifiers* of the true Christ of God; not as the high-priests did many hundred years ago, nailing his outward humanity to an outward cross, but crucifying afresh the son of God, who is the Christ that every man crucifies as often as he gives way to wrath, pride, envy, or covetousness. For where pride, and envy, and hatred, are wilfully indulged, there the same thing is done, as when Christ was killed, and *Barabbas* was saved alive.

In all the universe, nothing but heaven and heavenly creatures could have been known, had every creature continued in that state in which it came forth from God. For God can will nothing in the life of the creature but a manifestation of his own goodness, happiness, and perfection. And therefore, where this is wanted, it is certain, the creature hath lost its first state that it had from God. Every thing therefore, which is the *vanity*, the *torment*, and evil, of man, or any intelligent creature, is solely the effect of his will turned from God. Misery and wickedness can have no other root; for whatever wills and works with God, must partake of the happiness and perfection of God.

This therefore is a certain truth, that hell and death, curse and misery, can never be removed from the creation, till the will of the creature is again as it came from God, a *spirit of love*, that willeth no

thing but goodness. All the whole fallen creation, stand it never so long, must groan and travel in pain, till every contrariety to the divine will is entirely taken from every creature.

Thus, Sir, you have seen the original, immutable ground of the spirit of love. It is no imaginary refinement, or speculative curiosity; but is of the highest reality. It stands in the immutability and perfection of God; and not only every intelligent creature, be it what and where it will, but every inanimate thing must work in vanity till it works under the spirit of love.

Every son of fallen *Adam* is under this same necessity of working and striving after *something* that he neither is nor hath. All evil as well as good men, all the wisdom and folly of this life, are a proof of this. For the vanity of wicked men in their various ways, and the labours of good men in faith and hope, proceed from the *same cause*, viz. from a *want* and *desire* of having and being *something* that they neither are nor have. The evil seek wrong, and the good seek right; but they both are *seekers*, and for the same reason; because their present state has not *that* which it wants to have. And this must be the state of every creature that has fallen from its first state. It must do as the *polluted fluid* does; it must ferment and work, either *right* or *wrong*, to mend its state. The muddled wine always works right to the utmost of its power, because it works according to nature; but if it had an intelligent free will, it might work as vainly as man does; it might continually *thicken* itself, be always stirring up its *own dregs*, and then it would seek for its purity, just as well as the soul of man seeks for its happiness in the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. All which must fall away from the heart of man before it can find its happiness in God, as the dregs must separate from the wine before it can have its perfection and clearness.

Purification therefore is so necessary, that nothing will do in the stead of it. But man is not purified,

till every earthly, wrathful, sensual, selfish temper is taken from him. He is not dying to himself, till he is dying to these tempers; and he is not alive in God, but as he is dead to them. It is the purity and perfection of the divine nature that must be brought again into him: Nor are you to think that these words, the *purity* and *perfection* of God, are too high to be used on this occasion; for they only mean, that the will of the creature must *will* and *work* with the will of God; and whatever does not thus, is at enmity with God, and cannot have life and happiness with him.

Now, nothing wills and works with God but the *spirit of love*; because nothing else works in God himself. The Almighty brought forth all nature for this only end, that boundless love might have its *infinity* of height and depth to dwell and work in; and all the properties of nature are only to give life and strength to the spirit of love, that it may come forth into outward activity, and manifest its blessed powers; that all creatures may communicate the spirit of love and goodness, give and receive delight to and from one another. All below this state of love, is a fall from the one life of God, the only life in which the God of love can dwell.

Now who can restore this life? The unbelieving *Jews* said of our Lord, *How can this man forgive sins?* Christ shewed them *how*, by appealing to that power which they saw he had over the body: *Whether*, says he, *is it easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk?* But the delusion of the unbelieving deist is greater than that of the *Jew*. For the deist sees, that his reason has no power over his body; can remove no disease, blindness, deafness, or lameness, from it; and yet will pretend to have power enough from his reason, to help the soul out of all its evil; not knowing that he only, who can say to the dead body of *Lazarus*, *Come forth*, can say to the soul, *Be thou clean*. The deist therefore, if he pleases, may stile himself a natural, or a moral philosopher, but with no more truth,

than he can call himself an *healer* of all the maladies of the body. And for a man to think himself a moral philosopher, because he has made a choice collection of syllogisms, in order to quicken and revive a divine goodness in the soul; or that no redeemer need come from heaven, because human reason, when truly left to itself, has great skill in chopping of logic; may justly be deemed such an ignorance of the nature of things, as is seldom found in the transactions of illiterate and vulgar life. But this by the by :

To return to our chief subject: the sum is this: All evil, all misery of every kind, is nothing else but nature left to *itself*; and therefore, there is no *possibility* for the natural, earthly man to escape eternal wrath, but solely in the way the gospel teacheth, by denying and dying to himself. On the other hand, all the goodness and perfection, all the happiness, glory, and joy, that any intelligent creature can be possessed of, is, and can be, from nothing else, but the invisible uncreated light and spirit of God manifesting itself in the creatures, *filling, blessing,* and *uniting* them all in *one love*.

And thus again: There is no possibility of man's attaining to any heavenly perfection and happiness, but only in the way of the gospel, by the union of the divine and human nature, by man's being born again from above, of the *word* and *spirit* of God. There is no possibility of any other way, because there is nothing that can possibly change us into an heavenly state, but the presence and power of the Deity united with, and working in us. And therefore the *word was made flesh*, and must of all necessity be made flesh, if man is to have an heavenly nature. Now as all evil, sin, and misery, have no beginning, nor power of working, but in the manifestation of *contrary* properties; so man has nothing to turn to, seek, or aspire after, but the lost *spirit of love*. And therefore it is, that God only can be his redeemer; because God only is love; and love can be

be no-where else, but in God, and where God dwelleth and worketh.

Now the difficulty you find in attaining this spirit of love, is because you seek for it, in the way of reasoning: you would be possessed of it only from a rational conviction of the fitness and amiableness of it. And as this clear idea does not put you into the possession of it, your reason begins to waver; and suggests to you, that it may be only a *fine notion*, that has no ground but in the power of imagination. But this, Sir, is all your own error; as if you would have your eyes do that, which only your hands or feet can do for you. The *spirit of love* is a spirit of nature and life; and therefore can only be produced in you, by that almighty power which produced all nature, and gave life to every living thing. Life can only arise in its own time and place from its proper cause, and as the genuine effect of it. Nature and life do nothing by chance, or accidentally, but every thing in one uniform way. Fire, air, and light, do not proceed sometimes from one thing, and sometimes from another; but wherever they are, they are always born in the same manner, and from the same working in the properties of nature. So in like manner, love is an *immutable birth*, always proceeding from the same cause, and cannot be in existence till its own true parents have brought it forth.

How unreasonable would it be to doubt whether strength and health of body were real things, or possible to be had, because you could not by the power of your reason take possession of them? Yet this is as well as to suspect the purity and perfection of love to be only a *notion*, because your reason cannot bring it forth in your soul. For reason has no more power of altering the life and properties of the soul, than of altering the life and properties of the body. That, and that only, can cast devils, and evil spirits, out of the soul, that can say to the storm, Be still; and to the leper, Be thou clean.

And now, Sir, you see the absolute necessity of the gospel-doctrine of the cross; viz. of dying to ourselves.

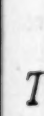
selves, as the only way to life in God. This is the one morality that does man any good. Fancy as many rules as you will, of modelling the moral behaviour of man, they all do nothing, because they leave nature still alive; and therefore can only help a man to an art of concealing his own inward evil. But still nature can no more change from evil to good, than darkness can work itself into light. The one work therefore is to resist and deny nature, that a supernatural power may take possession of it.

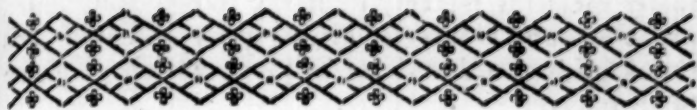
There is no standing still, life goes on, and is always bringing forth its *realities*, which way soever it goeth. You see the *true state* of every natural man, whether he be *Cæsar* or *Cato*, whether he gloriously murders others, or only stabs himself; blind nature does all the work, and must be the doer of it, till the light of God has helped them to *one common good*, in which they all willingly *unite, rest, and rejoice*. In a word, goodness is only a *sound*, and virtue a mere strife of *natural passions*, till the *spirit of love* is the breath of every thing that lives, and moves in the heart. For love is the one only blessing, and goodness, and God of nature; and you have no true religion, are no worshipper of the one true God, but in and by that spirit of love, which is God himself living and working in you.



AN
E X T R A C T
FROM
Mr. L A W's
Spirit of L O V E.
PART II.







A

D I A L O G U E

B E T W E E N

Theogenes, Eusebius, and Theophilus.

Theoph. MY heart embraces you both with the greatest affection, and I am much pleased at the occasion of your coming, which calls me to the most delightful subject in the world, to help both you and myself, to rejoice in that adorable Deity, whose infinite being is an infinity of mere love, an unbeginning, never-ceasing, and for ever overflowing ocean of meekness, sweetness, delight, blessing, goodness, patience, and mercy; and all this, as so many blessed streams breaking out of the abyss of universal love. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, a triune infinity of love and goodness, for ever and ever, giving forth nothing but the same gifts of light and love. of blessing and joy, whether before or after the fall, either of angels, or men.

Look at all nature, through all its height and depth, in all its variety of powers, it is what it is, for this only end, that the hidden riches, the invisible blessings, glory and love of the unsearchable God, may become visible, sensible, and manifest in it, and by it.

Look at all the variety of creatures. they are what they are, for this only end, that in their infinite variety

riety, degrees, and capacities, they may be as so many speaking figures, so many sounds and voices; preachers and trumpets, giving glory and praise, and thanksgiving to that deity of love, which gives life to all nature.

For every creature call it by what name you will, had its form, and power, and state, and place in nature for no other end, but to open and enjoy, to manifest and rejoice in some share of the love and happiness, and goodness of the deity.

Now this is the *one will* and work of God, in, and through all creatures. From eternity to eternity he can will, and intend nothing towards them, in them, or by them, but the *communication* of various degrees of his own love, goodness and happiness to them, according to their state and place, and capacity. This is God's unchangeable disposition towards the creature; he can be nothing else, but all goodness towards it; because he can be nothing towards the creature, but that which he is, and was; and ever shall be in himself.

Theogenes. Pray, *Theophilus*, let me ask you, Does not patience and pity, and mercy begin to be in God, and only then begin, when the creature has brought itself into misery? They could have no existence in the deity before.

Theophilus. 'Tis true, *Theogenes*, that God can only then begin to make known his mercy and patience, when the creature has lost its rectitude and happiness; yet nothing then begins to be in God, or to be found in him, but that which was always in him, in the same infinite state, viz. *a will to all goodness*, and which *can will nothing else*. And his patience and mercy, which could not shew forth themselves, till sin had brought forth misery, were not new tempers, or the beginning of some *new* disposition, that was not in God before, but only *new* and *occasional* manifestations of that boundless, *eternal will to all goodness*, which always was in God in the same height and depth. The will to all *goodness*, which is God himself, *began* to display itself in a new way, when it first gave birth to creatures. The same will to all
goodness

goodness began to manifest itself in another new way, when it became patience and compassion towards fallen creatures. But neither of these ways are the beginning of any new tempers or qualities in God, but only new and occasional manifestations of that true eternal will to all goodness, which always was, and always will be, in the same fulness in God.

And salvation is, and can be nothing else, but the manifestation of the life of God in the soul. How clearly does this give the solid distinction between inward holiness, and all outward practices. All that God has done for man by any particular dispensations, whether by the law or the prophets, by the scriptures, or ordinances of the church, are only as helps to an holiness, which they cannot give, but are only suited to the death and darkness of the earthly life, to turn it from itself, from its own workings, and awaken in it a faith and hope, a hunger and thirst after that first union with the deity, which was lost in the fall of the first father of mankind.

How unreasonable is it, to call perpetual inspiration fanaticism, and enthusiasm, when there cannot be the least degree of goodness or happiness in any intelligent being, but what is in its whole nature, merely and truly the breathing, the life, and the operation of God in the life of the Creature? For if goodness can only be in God, if it cannot exist separate from him, if he can only bless and sanctify by himself becoming the blessing and sanctification of the creature, then it is the highest degree of blindness to look for any goodness, and happiness from any thing but the immediate indwelling, union and operation of the deity in the creature. Perpetual inspiration, therefore, is in the nature of the thing as necessary to a life of goodness, holiness, and happiness, as the perpetual respiration of the air is necessary to animal life.

For the life of the creature, whilst possessing nothing but itself, is hell; that is, it is all pain and want and distress. Now nothing can help it to be in light and love, in peace and goodness, but the union of God with

with it, and the life of God working in it, because nothing but God is light, and love, and heavenly goodness. And, therefore, where the life of God is not become the life and goodness of the creature, it cannot have the least degree of goodness in it.

What a mistake is it, therefore, to confine inspiration to particular times and occasions, to prophets and apostles, and extraordinary messengers of God! and to call it *enthusiasm*, when the common Christian looks, and trusts to be *continually led and inspired* by the spirit of God! For tho' all are not called to be prophets, or apostles, yet all are called to be *holy*, as he who has called them is *holy*, to be *perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect*, to be *like minded with Christ*, to will only as God wills, to do all to his honour and glory, to renounce the spirit of this world, to have their conversation in heaven, to set their affections on things above, to love God with all their heart, soul, and spirit, and their neighbour as themselves.

Behold a work as great, as divine and supernatural, as that of a prophet and an apostle. But to suppose that we ought, and may always be in this spirit of holiness, and yet are not, and ought not to be always moved and led by the spirit of God within us, is to suppose, that there is a holiness and goodness which comes not from God; which is no better than supposing, that there may be true prophets and apostles who have not their truth from God.

Now the holiness of the common Christian is not an occasional thing, that begins and ends, or is only for such a time, or place, or action, but is the holiness of that, which is always alive, and stirring in us, namely, of our thoughts, wills, and affections. If therefore these are always alive in us, always governing our lives, than a perpetual operation of the spirit of God within us, is absolutely necessary. For we cannot be inwardly led and governed by a spirit of goodness, but by being governed by the spirit of God himself.

If our thoughts, wills, and affections, need only be now and then holy and good, then, indeed, the spirit

spirit of God need only now and then govern us. But if our thoughts and affections are to be always holy, then the holy spirit of God is to be always operating within us.

The scripture saith, *We are not sufficient of ourselves to think a good thought.* If so, then we cannot be chargeable with not thinking, and willing that which is good, but upon this *supposition*, That there is always a *supernatural* power ready, and able to help us to the good, which we cannot have from ourselves.

How firmly our established church adheres to this doctrine of the necessity of the *perpetual operation* of the holy spirit, as the one only source of any degree of divine light, wisdom, virtue, and goodness in the soul of man, how earnestly she requires all her members to live in the most open profession of it, and in the highest conformity to it, may be seen by many such prayers as these in her ordinary, public service.

O God for as much as without thee, we are not able to please thee, grant that thy holy spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts. Again we pray thee, that thy grace may ALWAYS prevent and follow us, and make us CONTINUALLY to be given to all good works. Again, Grant to us, Lord, we beseech thee, the spirit to think and do ALWAYS such things as be rightful, that we, who cannot do ANY THING that is good, WITHOUT thee, may, by thee, be enabled to live according to thy will. Again, Because the frailty of man, WITHOUT thee, CANNOT BUT FALL, keep us EVER, by thy HELP, from all things hurtful, and LEAD us to all things profitable to our salvation, &c. Again, O God from whom all good things do come, grant to us, thy humble servants, that by THY holy INSPIRATION, we may THINK those things that be good, and, by thy merciful GUIDING, may PERFORM the same.

And now, *Eusebius*, how is the great controversy about religion, and salvation, shortened.

For since the one work of Christ as your Redeemer, is to take from the earthly life of flesh and blood,

its usurped power, and to raise the smothered spark of heaven, out of death, into life, your *one* work also, under your Redeemer is fully known. And you have the utmost certainty, *what* you are to do, *where* you are to seek, and in *what* you are to find your salvation. All that you have to do, is to oppose, resist, to renounce the evil tempers, and workings of your earthly nature. You want no deliverance, but from the power of yourself. This is the one murderer of the divine life within you. And every thing that your earthly nature does, is under the influence of *self-will*, *self-love*, and *self-seeking*, whether it carries you to laudable, or blameable practices, all is done in the nature and spirit of *Cain*, and only helps you to such goodness, as when *Cain* slew his brother. For every action and motion of *self*, has the spirit of *antichrist*, and murders the divine life within you.

Judge not therefore of yourself, by considering how many of those things you do, which *divines* and *moralists* call virtue and goodness, nor how much you abstain from those things, which they call sin and vice.

But daily and hourly, in every step that you take, see to the *spirit that is within you*, whether it be heaven, or earth that guides you. And judge every thing to be sin and Satan, in which your *earthly nature*, has any share of life in you; nor think that any goodness is in you, but so far as it is an *actual death* to the pride, the vanity, the wrath, and selfish tempers of your fallen, earthly life.

Again, here you see, *where* and how you are to seek your salvation, not in taking up your travelling-staff, or crossing the seas to find out a new *Luther* or a new *Calvin*, to cloath yourself with their opinions. No. The *oracle* is at home, that *always* speaks the truth to you; nothing is your truth, but that good and that evil which is within you. For salvation or damnation is not an outward thing, but springs up within you. What you are in yourself, what is doing in yourself, is either your salvation or damnation.

Again

Again nothing that we do is bad, but for this reason, because it *resists* the power, and working of God within us; and nothing that we do, can be good, but because it conforms, to the spirit of God within us. And therefore, you have the utmost certainty, that God, salvation and the kingdom of heaven, are within you, and that all *outward religion*, from the fall of man to this day, is not for itself, but merely for the sake of an *inward and divine* life, which was lost when *Adam* died his first death in paradise. So that it may well be said, *circumcision is nothing*, and *uncircumcision is nothing*, because nothing is wanted, but a *new creature* called out of the death and darkness of flesh and blood, into the light, life and perfection of its first creation.

And thus also, you have the fullest proof in *what* your salvation precisely consists. Not in any historic faith, or knowledge of any thing absent, or distant from you, not in any variety of restraints, rules, and methods of practising virtues, not in any formality of opinion about *faith* and *works*, *repentance*, *forgiveness* of *sins*, or *justification*, and *sanctification*, not in any truth, or righteousness, that you can have from yourself, from the best of men or books, but wholly and solely in the life of God.

Theogenes. I have not the least doubt about any of these things. It is visible, that there can be no medium in this matter, either religion must be all spiritual, or all carnal; that is, we must either take up with the grossness of the *Sadduces*, who say, there is neither angel nor spirit, or with such purification as the *Pharisees* had from their washing of pots and vessels, and tithing their mint and rue; we must I say, either acquiesce in this carnality, or we must profess a religion, that is *all spirit and life*, and merely for the sake of raising up an *inward spiritual life* of heaven, that fell into death in our first father.

Oh *Theogenes*! What an eternity is that, out of which, and for which thy eternal soul was created?

What little, crawling things are all that an earthly ambition can set before thee? Bare with patience for a while the rags of thy earthly nature, the veil and darkness of flesh and blood, as the lot of thy inheritance from father *Adam*, but think nothing worth a thought but that which will bring thee back to thy first glory, and land thee safe in the region of eternity.



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AN
E X T R A C T
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A N

E X T R A C T

From the D I A L O G U E.

Eusebius. **T**HE doctrine of the Spirit of Love, cannot have more power over me, or be more deeply rooted in me, than it is already. It has so gained possession of my whole heart, that every thing else must be under its dominion. I can do nothing else but love ; it is my whole nature, I have no taste for any thing else. Can this matter be carried higher in practice ?

Theophilus. No higher, *Eusebius.* And was this the true state of your heart, you would bid fair to leave the world as *Elijah* did. For was there nothing but this divine love alive in you, your fallen flesh and blood would be in danger of being burnt up by it. What you have said of yourself, you have spoken in great sincerity, but in a total ignorance of yourself, and of the spirit of divine love. You are as yet only charmed with the sight, or rather the sound of it ; its real birth is as yet unfelt, and unfound in you. Your natural complexion has a great deal of the animal meekness and softness of the *lamb*, and the *dove* ; your blood and spirit are of this turn ; and therefore a God all love, and a religion all love, quite transport you ; and you are so delighted with it, that you fancy you have nothing in you, but this religion of love. But, my friend, bear with me, if I tell you, that all this is only the *good part* of the spirit of this world, and may
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be in any unregenerate man, that is of your complexion. It is so far from being a genuine fruit of divine love, that if it be not well looked to, it may prove a real hindrance of it, as it oftentimes does, by its appearing to be that which it is not.

You have quite forgot all that was said in the letter to you on the spirit of love. You may love it as much as you please, think it the most charming thing in the world, fancy every thing but dross and dung, in comparison of it, and yet have no more of it in you, than the blind man has of that light, of which he has got a most charming notion.

Eusebius. But if I am got no farther than this, what good have I from giving in so heartily to all that you have said of this doctrine?

Theophilus. Your error lies in this; you confound two things, which are entirely distinct from each other. You make no difference betwixt the doctrine, that only sets forth the nature, excellency, and necessity of the spirit of love, and the *spirit of love* itself; which yet are two things so different, that you may be quite full of the former, and at the same time quite empty of the latter. I have said every thing that I could, to shew you the excellency and necessity of the spirit of love: It is of infinite importance to you to be well established in the belief of this doctrine. But all that I have said of it, is only to encourage you to buy it, at its own price, and to give all that for it, which alone can purchase it. But if you think you have got it, because you are so highly pleased with that which you have heard of it, you only embrace the shadow, instead of the substance.

Eusebius. What is the price that I must give for it?

Theophilus. You must give up all that you are, and all that you have from fallen *Adam*; for all that you are and have from him, is that life of flesh and blood, which cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Adam,

Adam, after his fall, had nothing that was good in him, nothing that could inherit an eternal life in heaven, but a seed of grace. Every thing else in him was devoted to death, that this *incorruptible seed* might grow up in *Christ Jesus*.

Theogenes. I am afraid the matter is much worse with me, than it is with *Eusebius*. For tho' this doctrine, seems to have got all my heart, as it is a doctrine; yet I am continually thrown out of it in practice, and find myself as much under the power of my old tempers and passions, as I was before I was so full of this doctrine.

Theophilus. You are to know, my friends, that every kind of virtue and goodness, may be brought into us, by two different ways. They may be taught us outwardly by men, by rules and precepts; and they may be inwardly wrought in us. In the former way, as we learn them only from men, they at best, only change our outward behaviour, leave our heart in its natural state, only put our passions under a forced restraint, which will occasionally break forth, in spite of precept and doctrine. Now this way of learning goodness, tho' thus imperfect, is yet absolutely necessary, in the nature of the thing, and must first have its time, and place, and work in us; yet it is only for a time, as the *law* was a school-master to the *gospel*. We must first be babes in doctrine, as well as in strength, before we can be men. But of all this outward instruction, whether from good men, or the *letter* of scripture, it must be said, as the apostle saith of the law, *that it maketh nothing perfect*.

The true profitableness of the written word of God, is fully set forth by *St. Paul* to *Timothy*: *From a child*, saith he, *thou hast known the scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, which is by faith in Christ Jesus*. Now these scriptures were the *law* and the *prophets*, for *Timothy* had known no other from his youth. And as they, so all other scriptures since, have no other good, or benefit in them, but as they lead us to a salvation, that is not to be had

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in themselves, but from faith in Christ Jesus. Their teaching is only to teach us, where to seek and to find the fountain of all light and knowledge.

Of the law, faith the apostle, *it was a school-master to Christ*. The same thing is to be affirmed of the letter of the New Testament; it is but our school-master unto Christ. Nor can the thing possibly be otherwise; no instruction that comes under the form of words can do more for us, than sounds, and words can do; they can only direct us to something that is better than themselves, that can be the true light, life, spirit, and power of holiness in us.

Eusebius. I cannot deny what you say, and yet it seems to me to derogate from scripture.

Theoph. Would you then have me to say, that the *written word* of God, is that word of God, which liveth, and abideth for ever; that word, which was with God, which was God, by whom all things were made; that word of God, which was made flesh for the redemption of the world; that word which lighteth every man, that cometh into the world; that word, which in Christ Jesus is become wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification in us; would you have me say, that all this is to be understood of the *written word* of God? If this cannot possibly be, then all that I have said is granted, namely, that Jesus is alone *that word* of God, that can be the light, life, and salvation of fallen man. And how is it possible more to exalt the letter of scripture, than by owning it to be a true, outward direction to the one only true light, and salvation of man.

Suppose you had been a true disciple of *John the Baptist*, whose office was, to prepare the way to Christ, how could you have more magnified his office, than by going from his teaching, to be taught by Christ? The *Baptist* was indeed a burning and a shining light, and so are the holy scriptures; but he was not *that light*, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light, which lighteth every man, that cometh into the world.

What a folly would it be, to say that you had undervalued the office, and the character of *John the Baptist*,

Baptist, because he was not allowed to be the light itself, but only a true witness of it, and guide to it? Now if you can shew, that the written word can have any other, or higher office, or power, than such a ministerial one, as the *Baptist* had, I am ready to hear you.

Eusebius. There is no possibility of doing that.

Theophilus. But if that is not possible to be done, then you are come to the full proof of this point, viz. that there are two ways of attaining knowledge, goodness, virtue, the one by outward, verbal instruction, either by men or books, and the other by inward light, goodness, and virtue, in our own renewed spirit; and that the former is only in order to the latter, and of no benefit to us, but as it carries us farther than itself, to be united in heart and spirit with the light and spirit of God. Just as the *Baptist* had been of no benefit to his disciples, unless he had been their guide from himself to Christ.

But to come closer to our subject. From this twofold teaching, there necessarily arises, a twofold state of goodness. For such as the teacher, or teaching is, such is the goodness, that can be had from it. Every effect must be according to the cause, that produces it. If you learn goodness only from outward means, from men, or books, you may be virtuous and good according to outward forms; you may do works of humility, works of love and benevolence, use times and forms of prayer: all this virtue and goodness is suitable to this kind of teaching. But the spirit of prayer, the spirit of love, and the spirit of humility, or of any other virtue, are only to be attained, by the operation of the light and spirit of God, not outwardly teaching, but awakening within us.

And now let me tell you both, it is much to be feared, you as yet stand only under this outward teaching; your good works are only done under obedience to such rules, and doctrines, as your reason assents to, but are not the fruits of a new born spirit within you. But till you are thus renewed in the spirit of your minds, your virtues are only taught practices,

practices, and grafted upon a corrupt bottom. Every thing you do, will be a mixture of good and bad; your humility will help you to pride, your charity to others will give nourishment to your own self-love, and as your prayers increase, so will the opinion of your own sanctity. Because, till the heart is purified, and has felt the axe at the root of its evil, (which cannot be done by outward instruction) every thing that proceeds from it, partakes of its impurity and corruption.

Now that *Theogenes* is only under the law, or outward instruction, is plain from the complaint he made of himself. For notwithstanding his progress in the doctrine of love, he finds all his corrupt nature, still alive in him, and himself only altered in opinion.

The same may be well suspected of you, *Eusebius*, who are so mistaken in the spirit of love, that you fancy yourself to be wholly possessed of it, from no other ground, but because you embrace it, as it were with open arms, and think of nothing but living under the power of it. Whereas, if the spirit of love was really in you, you would account for its birth, and power in you, in quite another manner, you would have known the price that you had paid for it, before the spirit of love was in you.

Eusebius. But, surely, Sir, imperfect as our virtues are, we are under something more than mere outward instruction. We expect all our goodness from the spirit of God dwelling and working in us. We live in hope of the divine operation; and therefore your censure upon us seems to be too severe.

Theophilus. Dear *Eusebius*, I censure neither of you. So far from it, that I love and approve the state you are in. It is good for *Theogenes*, that he feels and confesses his natural tempers are not yet subdued. It is good for you also, that you are so highly delighted with the doctrine of love, for by this means, both of you have your true preparation for farther advancement. But tho' your state has this difference, yet the same error was common to both

of you. You both thought, you had as much of the spirit of love as you ought to have; and therefore *Theogenes* wondered he had no more benefit from it; and you wondered that I should desire to lead you farther into it. And therefore, to deliver you from this error, I have desired this conference upon the practical ground of the spirit of love, that you may neither of you lose the benefit of that state in which you stand.

Eusebius. Pray therefore proceed as you please. For we have nothing so much at heart, as to have the truth and purity of this divine love in us. For as it is the highest perfection, that I adore in God, so I cannot desire any thing, but to be totally governed by it. I could as willingly consent to lose my being, as to find the power of love lost in my soul. Neither doctrine, nor mystery, nor precept has any delight for me, but as it calls forth that spirit, which doth all that it doth, towards God and man, under the one law of love.

Theophilus. I apprehend that you don't yet know what divine love is in itself, nor what is its nature and power in the soul of man. For divine love brings perfect peace and joy, a freedom from all disquiet, all content, and happiness. Love wherever it comes, comes as the restorer of every lost perfection, a redeemer from all evil, a fulfiller of all righteousness. Through all the universe, nothing is uneasy, unsatisfied, or restless, but because it is not governed by love, or because its nature has not reached or attained the full spirit of love. For when that is done, all complaining, murmuring, resenting, revenging, and striving, are suppressed. If you ask why the spirit of love cannot be displeased, cannot be disappointed, cannot complain, resent or murmur, it is because divine love desires nothing but itself; it is its own good, it has all, when it has itself, because nothing is good but itself, and its own working; for love is God, and he that dwelleth in God, dwelleth in love; tell me now, *Eusebius*, are you thus blessed in the spirit of love?

H

Eusebius.

Eusebius. Would you have me tell you, that I am an angel? And without the infirmities of human flesh and blood?

Theophilus. No; but I would have you judge of your state of love, by these angelical tempers, and not by any transient fervour. For just as far as you are freed from the folly of all earthly affections, from all disquiet, trouble and complaint about this, or that, just so far is the spirit of love in you. For divine love is a new life, and new nature, and introduces you into a new world; it puts an end to all your former opinions and tempers, it opens new senses in you, and makes you see high to be low, and low to be high; wisdom to be foolishness, and foolishness wisdom; it makes prosperity and adversity, praise and dispraise, to be equally nothing. *When I was a child, saith the apostle, I thought as a child, I spake as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things.* Whilst man is under the power of nature, governed only by worldly wisdom, his life (however old he may be) is quite childish; every thing about him only awakens childish thoughts, and pursuits in him: all that he sees and hears, all that he desires or fears, likes, or dislikes; that which he gets, and that which he loses; that which he hath, and that which he hath not, serve only to carry him from this fiction of evil, to that fiction of good, from one vanity of peace, to another vanity of trouble. But when divine love is in the soul, all childish images of good and evil are done away, and all the *sensibility* of them is lost, as the stars lose their visibility, when the sun is risen.

And now we are fairly brought to the one great practical point, on which all our proficiency in the spirit of love depends. Namely, *that all we are, and all we have from Adam, as fallen, must be given up absolutely, if divine love is to be brought forth in us.* For all that we are by nature, is in full contrariety to this divine love, so a death to ourselves is its only cure, and nothing else can make it subservient to good.

Theogenes.

Theogenes. I now sufficiently see, how man stands in the midst of heaven and hell, under an absolute necessity of belonging wholly to the one, or wholly to the other, as soon as this cover of materiality is taken off from him.

For matter is his only wall of partition between them, he is equally nigh to both of them: and as light and love make all the difference there is between heaven and hell, so nothing but light and love wrought in his soul, can possibly keep hell out of it, or bring heaven into it.

I now also see the full truth, and certainty of what you said of the nature and power of divine love; viz. "that it brings perfect peace and joy, a freedom from all disquiet, making every thing to rejoice in itself. That wherever it comes, it comes as the blessing and happiness, of every natural life; as the restorer of every lost perfection; a redeemer from all evil; a fulfiller of all righteousness. So that I am now, a thousand times more than ever, athirst after the spirit of love. I am willing to sell all, and buy it; its blessing is so great, and the want of it so dreadful, that I am even afraid of lying down in my bed, till every power of my soul, is given up to it, wholly possessed and governed by it.

Theophilus. You have reason for all you say, *Theogenes*; for were we truly affected with things, as they are our real good or evil, we should be much more afraid of having the serpents of covetousness, envy, pride, and wrath, kept alive within us, than of being shut up in a pest-house, or cast into a dungeon of venomous beasts. On the other hand, we should look upon the lofty eloquence, and proud virtue of a *Cicero*; but as the blessing of storm and tempest, when compared with the heavenly tranquility of that meek and lowly heart, to which our Redeemer has called us.

Theogenes. I could almost say, that you have shewn me more than enough of this monster of self, tho' I would not be without this knowledge of it, for half the world. But now, Sir, what must I do, to be

saved from the mouth of this lyon, for he is the depth of all subtlety, and deceiveth the whole world. He can hide himself, under all forms of goodness, he can watch and fast, write and instruct, pray much, and preach long, give alms to the poor, visit the sick, and yet often gets more life and strength, and a more *unmoveable abode*, in these forms of virtue, than he has in publicans and sinners.

Enjoin me therefore, whatever you please, all rules, methods, and practices will be welcome to me, if you judge them to be necessary in this matter.

Theophilus. There is no need of a number of practices, or methods. For to die to self, or to come from under its power, is not, cannot be done by any *active* resistance, we can make to it by the powers of nature. For nature can no more suppress itself, than wrath can heal wrath. So long as nature acts, nothing but natural works are brought forth, and therefore the more labour of this kind, the more nature is fed and strengthened, with its own food.

But the *one true* way of dying to self, is most *simple* and plain; it wants no arts, or methods, no *cells*, *monasteries*, or *pilgrimages*, it is equally practicable by every body, it is always at hand, it meets you in every thing, it is free from all deceit, and is never without success.

If you ask what this one, true, simple, way is: it is the way of *patience*, *meekness*, *humility*, and *resignation* to God. This is the *truth* and *perfection* of dying to oneself; it is no where else, but in this state of heart.

Theogenes. The excellency and perfection of these virtues, I acknowledge; but alas, Sir, how will this prove the way of *overcoming oneself* to be so *simple* and *immediate*, as you speak? For is it not the doctrine of almost all men, and all books, and confirmed by our own woful experience, that much length of time, and exercise, and variety of practices and methods are necessary, and scarce sufficient to the attainment of any one of these four virtues?

Theophilus.

Theophilus. When Christ our Saviour was upon earth, was there any thing more simple and plain, than the way to him? Did Scribes, Pharisees, Publicans, and Sinners, want any length of time, or exercise of rules, and methods, before they could have admission to him, or have the benefit of faith in him?

Theogenes. I don't understand, why you put this question, nor do I see how it can relate to the matter before us.

Theophilus. It not only relates to, but is the very truth of the matter before us: for when I refer you to patience, meekness, humility, and resignation to God, as the one simple, plain, immediate, way of dying to yourself; I call it so, for no other reason, but because you can as *easily* and *immediately*, without art or method, have all the benefit of these virtues, as Publicans and Sinners by their turning to Christ, could be helped, and saved by him.

Theogenes. But, good Sir, would you have me believe, that my *turning* and *giving* up myself to these virtues, is as certain, and immediate a way of my being possessed of their power, as when sinners turned to Christ to be helped, and saved by him? Surely this is too short a way, and has too much of miracle in it, to be now expected.

Theophilus. I would have you strictly to believe all this, in the fullest sense of the words. And also to believe, that the reasons why you, or any one else, are for a long time vainly endeavouring after, and hardly ever attaining these virtues, is because you seek them in the way they are not to be found, in a *multiplicity* of human rules, methods, and contrivances, and not in that *simplicity* of faith, in which, those who applied to Christ, immediately obtained that, which they asked of him?

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. How short and simple and certain a way to peace and comfort, from the misery and burden of sin! What becomes now of your length of time, and exercise, your rules and methods, and

round about ways, to be delivered from the power of sin, and find the redeeming power, and virtue of Christ? Will you say, that turning to Christ in faith was *once* indeed the way for *Jews* and *Heathens* to enter into life, and be delivered from the power of their sins, but that all this happiness was at an end, as soon as *Pontius Pilate* had nailed this good Redeemer to the cross, and so broke off all *immediate* union, and communion between faith and Christ?

What a folly would it be to suppose, that Christ after his having finished his great work, overcome death, ascended into heaven, with all power in heaven and on earth, was become less a Saviour, and gave less certain, and immediate helps to those, that by faith turn to him now, than when he was clothed with the infirmity of our flesh and blood upon earth? Has he less power, after he has conquered, than whilst he was only resisting and fighting with our enemies? Or has he less good will to assist his church, his own body, now he is in heaven, than he had to assist Publicans, Sinners and Heathens, before he was glorified? And yet this must be the case, if our *simply turning* to him in faith, is not as sure a way of obtaining immediate assistance from him now, as when he was upon earth.

Theogenes. You seem, Sir, to me, to have stepp'd aside from the point, which was not, whether my giving myself up to Christ in faith, would not do me as much good, as it did to them, who turned to him when he was upon earth? But whether my turning in faith and desire, to *patience, meekness, humility, and resignation* to God, would do all that as fully for me now, as faith in Christ did for those, who became his disciples?

Theophilus. I have stuck closely, my friend, to the point before us. Let it be supposed, that I had given you a form of prayer in these words. *O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, or, O thou bread that camest down from heaven, or, Thou that art the resurrection, and the life, the light and peace of all holy souls, help me to a living faith in thee.* Would you say, that
this

this was not a prayer of faith in, and to Christ, because it did not call him *Jesus*, or the *Son of God*? Answer me plainly.

Theogenes. What can I answer you, but that this is a true prayer to Jesus, the Son of the living God? For who else but he, was the *Lamb of God*, and the *Bread* that came down.

Theophilus. Well answered, my friend. When therefore, I exhort you to give up yourself in faith and hope, to *patience*, *meekness*, *humility*, and *resignation to God*, what else do I do, but turn you directly to *so much* faith, and hope in the true Lamb of God? Must you not say, that faith and desire of these virtues, is the *very same* thing, as faith and desire of salvation through the Lamb of God? And consequently, that every sincere wish and desire that presses after these virtues, and longs to be governed by them, is an *immediate, direct* application to Christ, is *worshipping* and *falling down* before him, is *giving up* yourself unto him, and the *very perfection* of faith in him?

If you distrust my words, hear the words of Christ himself; *Learn of me*, says he, *for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls*. Here you have the plain truth of our two points, fully asserted, *first*, that to be *given up to*, *patience*, *meekness*, *humility*, and *resignation to God*, is strictly the *same thing*, as to *learn of Christ*, or to have faith in him. *Secondly*, that this is the *one simple, short, and infallible* way to overcome, or be delivered from all the malignity and burden of *sin* express'd in these words; *and ye shall find rest unto your souls*.

And all this, because this simple tendency of your heart, to *sink down* into *patience*, *meekness*, *humility*, and *resignation to God*, is truly giving up all that you are, and all that you have from fallen *Adam*, it is perfectly leaving all that you have, to follow, and be with Christ, it is your highest act of faith in him, and love of him, a declaration of your cleaving to him with all your heart, and seeking for no salvation, but in him, and from him. And therefore all the blessing, and deliverance from sin, that

ever

ever happened to any one from any kind, or degree of faith, and application to Christ, is sure to be had from this state of heart, which stands continually *turned to him* in a desire of being led, and governed by his spirit of patience, meekness, humility and resignation to God. Oh *Theogenes*, could I help you to perceive, what a good there is in this state of heart, you would desire it with more eagerness, than the thirsty hart desireth the water-brooks, you would think of nothing, desire nothing, but constantly to live in it. It is a security from all evil, and all delusion; no difficulty, or trial either of body or mind, no temptation either within you, or without you, but what has its full remedy in this state of heart. You have no questions to ask of any body, no new way that you need enquire after; no oracle that you need to consult, for whilst you shut up yourself in patience, meekness, humility and resignation to God, you are in the very arms of Christ, your whole heart is his dwelling-place, and he lives and works in you, as certainly as he lived in, and governed that body and soul, which he took from the Virgin *Mary*.

Learn whatever you will from men, and books, or even from Christ himself, besides, or without these virtues, and you are only a poor wanderer in a barren wilderness, where no water of life is to be found. For Christ is no where, but in these virtues, and where they are, there is he in his own kingdom. From morning to night, let this be the object you follow, and then you will fully escape all the religious delusions that are in the world, and what is more, all the delusions of your own selfish heart.

For when these tempers live and abide in you, as the spirit and aim of your life, then Christ is in you of a truth, and the life that you then lead, is not yours, but Christ liveth in you. For this is following Christ with all your power: You cannot possibly make more haste after him, you have no other way of walking as he walked, no other way of being like him, of truly believing in him

him, but by wholly giving up yourself to patience, meekness, humility, and resignation to God.

But observe. There is no way to attain this without a total despair of all human help. When a man is brought to such an inward, full conviction, as to have no more hope from all human means, than he hopes to see with his hands, or hear with his feet, then it is, that he is truly prepared to die to sin; that is, to give up all thoughts of having or doing any thing that is good, in any other way but that of a meek, humble, patient, total resignation of himself to God. All that we do before *this conviction* is in great ignorance of ourselves, and full of weakness and impurity. Let our zeal be ever so wonderful, yet if it is not led and guided by this conviction, it is full of delusion. For God must do all, or all is nothing; but God cannot do all, till all is expected from him; and all is not expected from him, till *despairing* of ever human help, we trust in Christ alone for a patient, meek, humble, total resignation to God.

And now, my dear friends, I have brought you to the very place for which I desired this day's conversation; which was, to set your feet upon sure ground, with regard to the *spirit of love*. For all that variety of matters, through which we have passed, has been only a variety of proofs, that the *spirit* of divine love can have no place, in any fallen creature, till it wills and *chooses* to be dead to *all sin* in a patient, meek, humble resignation to the power and mercy of God.

And from this state of heart also, it is, that the *spirit* of prayer is born, which is the desire of the soul turned to God. Stand, therefore, steadfastly in *this will*, let nothing else enter into your mind, have no other contrivance, but every where, and in every thing to nourish, and keep up *this state* of heart, and then the light of heaven, and the love of God, will begin their work in you, will bless and sanctify every power of your fallen soul, you will be in a readiness for every kind of virtue and good work, and will know what it is to be led by the *spirit* of God.

Theogenes

Theogenes. But permit me to mention a fear that rises in me. Suppose I should find myself so overcome with my own selfish tempers, as not to be able to sink from them, into this meek, humble, patient, full resignation to God; what must I then do, or how shall I have the benefit of what you have taught me?

Theophilus. You are then at the very time, and place of receiving the fullest benefit from it. For tho' this patient, meek resignation is to be exercised with regard to all outward things; yet it chiefly respects our inward state, the troubles, perplexities, weaknesses, and disorders of our fallen souls. When you are most sensible of these, seek for help no other way, but wholly leave and give up yourself to be helped by the mercy of God. And thus, be your state what it will, you may always have the full benefit of this short, and sure way of resigning yourself to God. And the greater your distress is, the nearer you are to the greatest and best relief, provided you have but patience to expect it all from God. For nothing brings you so near divine relief, as the extremity of distress; for the goodness of God hath no other name or nature, but the helper of all that want to be helped; and nothing can possibly hinder your finding this goodness of God, and every other gift and grace that you stand in need of; nothing can hinder or delay it, but your turning from the only fountain of living water, to some broken cistern of your own making; to this or that opinion, division, or subdivision amongst Christians, carnally expecting some mighty things either from *Samaria*, or *Jerusalem*, *Paul* or *Apollos*, which are only to be had, by worshipping the father in spirit and in truth; which is then only done, when your whole heart and soul and spirit trust wholly and solely to the operation of that God, in whom we live, move, and have our being. And be assured of this, that we have neither more nor less of the divine operation within us, because of this or that outward form, but strictly in that degree,

as our faith, and hope, and trust, and dependance upon God, is more or less.

What a folly then to be so often perplexed about the way to God? For nothing is the way to God, but our heart; God is no where else to be found; and the heart itself cannot find him, but by its *own love* of him, *faith* in him, *dependance* upon him, *resignation* to him, and expectation of all from him.

These are short but full *articles* of true religion, which carry salvation along with them, which make a true and full offering of our whole nature to the *divine operation*, and also a true and full confession of the holy Trinity in Unity. For as they look wholly to the *father*, as blessing us with the *operation* of his *own word*, and *spirit*, so they truly confess, and worship the *holy Trinity* of God. And as they ascribe all to, and expect all from, this deity *alone*, so they make the truest and best of all confessions, that there is no God but one.

Let then *Arians*, *Semi-Arians*, and *Socians*, who puzzle their laborious brains to make paper-images of a Trinity for themselves; have nothing from you, but your pity and prayers; your foundation standeth sure, whilst you look for all your salvation through the *father*, working life in your soul, by his *own word*, and *spirit*, which dwell in him, and are one life, both in *him* and you.

Theogenes. I can never enough thank you, *Theophilus*, for this comfortable answer to my scrupulous fear. It seems now, as if I could always know how to find full relief in this humble, meek, patient, total resignation of myself to God. It is, as you said, a remedy that is always at hand, equally practicable at all times, and never in greater reality, than when my own tempers are making war against it in my heart.

You have quite carried your point with me; the God of patience, meekness and love, is the one God of my heart. It is now the whole bent, and desire of my

my soul, to seek for all my salvation in, and thro' the *merits* and *mediation* of the meek, humble, patient, resigned, suffering lamb of God, who alone hath power to bring forth these heavenly virtues in my soul. He is the bread of God, that came down from heaven, of which the soul must eat, or perish and pine in everlasting hunger. He is the eternal love and meekness, that left the bosom of his father, to be himself the resurrection of meekness and love, in all the darkened, wrathful souls of fallen men. What a comfort is it, to think that this lamb of God, son of the father, light of the world, who is the glory of heaven, and the joy of angels, is as near to us, as truly in the midst of us, as he is in the midst of heaven. And that not a thought, look, and desire of our heart, that presses towards him, longing to catch, as it were, one small spark of his heavenly nature, but is in as sure a way of finding him, touching him, and drawing virtue from him, as the woman who was healed, by longing but to touch the border of his garment.

This doctrine also makes me quite weary and ashamed of all my own natural tempers. Every whisper of impatience, uneasiness, resentment, pride, and wrath, shall be rejected with a *get thee behind me, Satan*, for it is his, and has its whole nature from him. To rejoice in a resentment gratified, appears now to me, to be quite frightful. For what is it, in reality, but rejoicing that the precious lamb of God is denied entrance into my soul? This is the strict truth of the matter. And to give up all resentment of every kind, and on every occasion, however artfully, beautifully, coloured, and to sink down into the humility of meekness under all contrariety, contradiction and injustice, always turning the other cheek to the Smiter, however haughty, is the surest of all means, to have nothing but Christ living, and working in you.

What a blindness was it in me; to think that I had no covetousness, because the love of *self*, was not felt by me! For to covet, is to desire; and what
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can it signify whether I desire this or that? If I desire any thing, but that which God would have me to be, and do, I stick in the mire of covetousness, and must have all that evil, and disquiet working in me, which robs *misers* of their peace both with God and man.

Oh sweet resignation of myself to God, happy death of every selfish desire, be thou my guide, and governor where-ever I go! nothing but thee can take me from myself, nothing but thee can lead me to God; hell has no power, where thou art; nor can heaven hide itself from thee. O may I never indulge a thought, bring forth a word, or do any thing for myself or others, but under the influence of thy blessed inspiration.

The sight, tho' distant, of this heavenly *Canaan*, this *sabbath* of the soul, resting in meekness, humility, patience and resignation under the spirit of God, is like the joyful voice of the bridegroom to my soul, and leaves no wish in me, but to be at the marriage-feast of the lamb.

Theophilus. Thither, *Theogenes*, you must certainly come, if you keep to the path of meekness, humility, patience, and full resignation to God. But if you go aside from it, let the occasion seem ever so glorious, or the effects ever so wonderful, it is only preparing for yourself, a *harder death*. For die you must, to every thing that you have worked or done under any other spirit, but that of meekness, humility and true resignation to God.

For these virtues are the only *wedding garment*; they are the *lamps*, and *vessels* well furnished with oil.

There is nothing that will do in the stead of them; they must have their *full* and *perfect* work in you, or the soul can never be delivered from its fallen, wrathful state. There is no possibility of salvation, but in this. And when the lamb of God has brought forth his own meekness, humility and full resignation to God in our souls, then are our lamps trimmed, and our virgin-hearts made ready for the marriage feast.

This marriage feast signifies the entrance into the highest state of union, that can be between God and the soul, in this life. This birth-day of the spirit of love in our souls, when ever we attain, will feast our souls with such peace, and joy in God, as will blot out the remembrance of every thing, that we called peace, or joy before.

Need I say any more to shew you how to come out of the wrath of your evil, earthly nature, into the sweet peace and joy of the spirit of love? Neither notions, nor speculations, nor rules, nor methods can bring it forth. It is the *child* of light, and cannot possibly spring up in you, but from the *light* of God rising in your soul, as it rises in heavenly beings. But the light of God cannot *arise*, in you, by any art or contrivance of your own, but only in the way of that meekness, humility and patience, which waits, trusts, resigns to, and expects all from the inward, living, life-giving operation of the triune God within you; creating, quickening, and reviving in your fallen soul, that image, and likeness of the holy Trinity, in which the first father of mankind was created.

Theogenes. You need say no more *Theophilus*; you have confirmed us in a full belief of that great truth namely, "That there is but one salvation for all mankind, and that is the *life of God*, in the soul. And also, that there is but *one possible* way for man to attain this life of God, not one for a *Jew*, another for a *Christian*, and a third for a *Heathen*. No, God is one, human nature is one, salvation is one, and the way to it is one, and that is, the *desire* of the soul turned to God."



AN
E X T R A C T
FROM
Mr. *L A W*'s
L E T T E R S.





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L E T T E R I.

IN answer to your doubt, concerning joining any church communion, I will tell you what I would do myself.

First, As to any defects in the outward form, and performance of *baptism* and the *supper of the Lord* in the church, I am under little or no concern about them; — *Because all that is inwardly meant, or intended by them, as the life, spirit, and benefit of them, is subject to no human power, is wholly transacted between God and myself, and cannot be taken from me, by any alteration made by man, in the outward celebration of them.*

If the church, in my baptism, should sprinkle a little milk, or wine, instead of water, upon my face, it would be no defective baptism to me, if I had all that inward disposition of repentance, of faith in Christ, to be born again of Him, which was meant, signified, and implied by such immersion into water, as was the first baptism.

The same may be said of the supper of the Lord, however varied in its outward manner from what it was at first, if the inward truth, pointed at by it, is loved and adhered to by me. I have all the benefit that could be had by it, when it was kept in their same outward form, in which the first church used it.

And therefore the outward celebration of these sacraments is revered by me, wherever they are observed, as standing in the same place, and significant of the same inward blessing, as in their first institution.

I join therefore in the public assemblies, not because of the *purity*, or *perfection* of that which is done

but because of that which is *meant* and *intended* by them : they mean the holy, public worship of God ; they mean the edification of Christians ; they are of great use to many people ; they keep the world from a total forgetfulness of God ; they help the ignorant and letterless to such a knowledge of God, and the scriptures, as they would not have without them.

And therefore, fallen as these church assemblies are, from their first spiritual state, I reverence them, as the *venerable remains* of all that, which once was, and will, I hope, be again, the glory of church assemblies, *viz.* the *ministration of the spirit*, and not of the letter.

And there are two great signs of the near approach of this day, in two very numerous, yet very different kinds of people in these kingdoms.

In the one sort, an extraordinary increase of new opinions, methods, and religious distinctions, is worked up to its utmost height. And we see them almost every day running with eagerness from one method to another, in quest of *something*, which they have not been able to find.

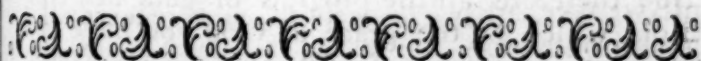
Now, as the vanity and emptiness of any thing, or way, is then only fully discovered, when it has run all its lengths, so that nothing remains untried, to keep up the deceit ; so when strife of opinions, invented forms, and all outward distinctions, have done their utmost, have no farther that they can go, then if the zeal was simple and upright, all must end in this full conviction, that vanity and emptiness, burden and deceit, must follow us in every course we take, till we expect all, and receive all, from the invisible God blessing our hearts with all heavenly gifts, by his eternal, all-creating word, and life-giving spirit in our souls.

The *other sign* is to be found in another kind of people, in most parts of these kingdoms, who in the midst of the noise and multiplicity of church-strife, having heard the still, and secret voice of the true shepherd, are turned inwards and are attentive to the inward truth, spirit, and life of religion,
searching

searching after the spiritual instruction, which leads them to seek Christ, and his redeeming spirit, as the only safe guide from inward darkness to inward light; and from outward shadows into the substantial, ever enduring truth; which truth is nothing else, but the *everlasting union of the soul with God, as its only good, through the spirit and nature of Christ truly formed and fully revealed in it.*—But to go no farther; I shall only add, that as yet, I know no better way of thinking or acting, than as above, with regard to the universal *fallen state* of all churches; for fallen they all are, as certainly as they are divided.

And all that is wanting to be removed from every church, or Christian society, in order to its being a part of the heavenly *Jerusalem*, is *that* which may be called its *own, human will, and carnal wisdom*; which is all to be given up, by turning the eyes and hearts of all its members, to an inward adoration, and total dependance upon the supernatural, invisible, omnipresent God of all spirits; to the inward teachings of Christ, as the power, the wisdom, and the light of God, working within them every good and blessing which they can ever receive, either on earth, or in heaven.

And therefore as the defects which, some way or other, are to be found in all churches, hinder not my communion with that, under which my lot is fallen, so neither do they hinder my being in full union, and hearty fellowship with all that is Christian, holy, and good, in every other church division.



LETTER II.

To the Reverend Mr. S.

My dear Friend and Brother,

IT is a great pleasure to me to think (as you say) that my letter to you, will also be to two of your brethren, who stand in the same state of earnestness to

to know how to be faithful and useful in their ministry, as you do: I hope God will increase your number.

The first business of a Clergyman awakened by God into a sensibility, and love of the truths of the gospel, and making them equally felt, and loved by others, is thankfully, and calmly, to adhere to, and give way to the increase of this new-risen light, and by turning his heart to God, as the sole author of it, humbly to beg of him, that all that, which he feels a desire of doing to those under his cure, may be first truly and fully done in himself.

Now the way to become more and more awakened, to feel more and more of this first conviction, is not to reason yourself into a deeper sensibility of it by finding out arguments: but the true way is, to keep close to the presence and power of God, which has manifested itself within you, willingly resigned to, and solely depending upon the one work of his all-creating word, and all quickening spirit, which is always more or less powerful in us, according as we more or less depend upon it.

And God is always ours, in such proportion as we are his: as our faith is in him, such is his presence in us. What an error therefore, to turn one thought, from him, or cast a look after any help but his; for, if we ask *all* of him, if we seek for *all* in him, if we knock only at his own door of mercy in Christ Jesus, and patiently wait there, God's kingdom must come, and his will must be done in us.

And therefore all the progress of your first conviction, which by the grace of God you have had from above, consists in the simplicity of your faith, in adhering to it, as the work of God in your soul, which can only go on in God's way, and can never cease to go on in you, any more than God can cease to be that which he is, but so far as it is stopped by your want of faith in it, or trusting to something else along with it. God is found, as soon as he alone is sought; but to seek God alone, is nothing else but the giving up ourselves unto him. For God is not absent

absent from us in any other respect, than as the spirit of our mind is *turned* from him, and not left wholly to him.

This *spirit of faith*, which not here, or there, or now and then, but every where, and in all things, looks up to God alone, trusts solely in him, depends absolutely upon him, expects all from him, and does all it does for him, is the utmost perfection of piety in this life. And this is that union with God, in which man was at first created, and to which he is again called, and will be fully restored by God and man being made one Christ.

Stephen was a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost. These are always together, the one can never be without the other.

This was *Stephen's* qualification for the deaconship, not because of any thing high or peculiar in that office, but because the gospel dispensation was the opening a kingdom of God amongst men, a spiritual theocracy, in which as God, and man fallen from God, were united in Christ, so an union of immediate operation between God and man was restored. Hence this dispensation was called, in distinction from all that went before it in outward types, figures and shadows, a *ministration of the spirit*, that is, an immediate operation of the spirit of God itself in man, in which nothing human, or depending upon the power of man's wit, ability, or natural powers, had any place, but all things begun in, and under obedience to the spirit, and all were done in the power of faith united with God.

Therefore to be a faithful minister of this new covenant between God and man, is to live by faith alone, to act only, and constantly under its power, to desire no will, understanding, or ability as a labourer in Christ's vineyard, but what comes from faith, and full dependance upon God's immediate operation in and upon us.

This is that very thing, which is expressly commanded by St. Peter, saying, *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God, if any man minister, let him do*
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it as of the ability which God giveth. For all which he giveth this reason, which will be a reason as long as the world standeth, viz. *That in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.* A plain declaration, that where this is not done, there God is not glorified by Christians through Christ Jesus.

God created men and angels solely for the glory of his love; and therefore angels and men, can give no other glory to God; but that of yielding themselves up to the work of his creating love, manifesting itself in the several powers of their natural life, so that the first creating love, which brought them into being, may go on creating, and working in them, according to its own never-ceasing will, to communicate good for ever and ever. This is their living to the praise and glory of God; namely by owning themselves, in all that they are, and have, and do, to be mere instruments of his power, presence, and goodness in them, and to them; which is all the glory they can return to their Creator, and all the glory for which he created them.

We can no otherwise worship God in spirit and in truth, than as our spirit seeks only to, depends only upon, and in all things adores, the life-giving power of his universal spirit; as the creator, upholder, and doer of all that is or can be good, either in time or eternity. For nothing can be good, but that which is according to the will of God, and nothing can be according to the will of God, but that which is done by his own spirit. This is unchangeable, whether in heaven, or in earth. And this is the one end of all the dispensations of God, however various, towards fallen man, viz. to bring man into an union with God. Comply with all the outward modes and institutions of religion, believe the letter, own the meaning of scripture facts, symbols, and doctrines; but if you seek to gain some other good from them, than that of being led from your own will, and own spirit, that the will of God, and the spirit of God, may do all that is willed, and done by you; however steadily you may adhere to such

a religion, you stand as fixed and steadily in your own fallen state. For the restoration of fallen man, is nothing else but the restoration of him to his first state, under the will and spirit of God, in and for which he was created.

You may here perhaps think that I am speaking too much at large, and not closely to the particular matter of your enquiry. But my intention hath been, so to speak to you on this occasion, as to lay a ground for a proper behaviour, under every circumstance of the outward work of your ministry. All things must be set right in yourself first, before you can rightly assist others.

I do not mean, that you must be first in a state of perfection, before you can be fitted to teach others. But I mean that you must first see, *in what* to place your own perfection, before you can rightly direct others in the way to it.

For this reason I have said all that is said above, to help you to set out under a right sense of all that religion is to do for yourself. When these things are not notionally, but practically known, then are you enabled, according to your measure, to speak of the truths of religion, to those that are ignorant, or insensible of them.

Your work is, to call every one home to himself, and help every heart to know its own state, to seek, and find, and feel his inward life and death, which have their birth, and growth, and strife, against one another, in every son of *Adam*.

And as this is the one good way of preaching, so it is, of all others, the most powerful, and penetrating into the hearts of all men, let their condition be what it will.

Their *hearing ears*, which though ever so sunk into dullness, will be forced more or less, to feel the power of that voice, which speaks nothing but what is, and must be in some sort within themselves.

And this is the great end of outward preaching, to give loud notice of the call of God in their souls, which though unheard, or neglected by them, is yet always

always subsisting within them. It is to make such outward sounds, as may reach and stir up the inward hearing of the heart. It is so to strike all the outward senses of the soul, that from sleeping in an inward insensibility of its own life and death, it may be brought into an awakened perception of itself, and be forced to know, that the evil of death which is in it, will be its eternal master, unless it seeks for victory in the name and power and mediation of Christ, the only Prince of life, and Lord of glory, and who only hath the keys of heaven, of death and hell, in his hands.

Hence you will be qualified, to open in your hearers, a right knowledge of the reality of every virtue and vice you are discoursing upon.

For since all that is good and evil, is only so to them, because it lives in their heart; they may easily be taught, that no virtue, whether it be humility, or charity, has any goodness in it, but as it springs in, and from the heart, nor any vice, whether it be pride, or wrath, is any farther renounced, than as its power, and place in the heart is destroyed. And thus the insignificancy and vanity of an outward formality of a virtuous behaviour, and every thing short of a new heart, and new spirit in, and through the power of Christ, dwelling in them, may be fully shewn to be self-delusion, and self-destruction.

Your next great point, as a preacher, should be to bring men to an entire faith in, and absolute dependence upon, the continual power and operation of the spirit of God in them.

All churches, even down to the Socinians, are forced, in obedience to the letter of scripture, to hold *something* of this doctrine.

But as all churches, for many ages, have had as much recourse to learning, art, and science, to qualify ministers for the preaching of the gospel, as if it was *merely* a work of man's wisdom, so ecclesiastics, for the most part, come forth in the power of human qualifications, and more or less to their own ability, according

according as they are more or less proficient in science and literature, languages and rhetoric.

To this, more than to any other cause, is the *great apostacy* of all Christendom to be attributed. This was the door, at which the *whole spirit* of the world entered into possession of the Christian church.

Worldly desires and interests, vanity, pride, envy, contention, bitterness, and ambition, the death of all that is good in the soul, have now, and always had their chief nourishment and support, from a sense of the merit, and sufficiency of literal accomplishments.

Humility, meekness, patience, faith, hope, contempt of the world, and heavenly affections (the very life of Jesus in the soul) are by few people less desired, or more hard to be practised, than by great *wits, classical critics, linguists, historians, and orators* in holy orders.

Now to bring a man to a full dependence upon, and faith in the continual operation of the Holy Spirit, as the only raiser and preserver of the life of God in their hearts, it is not enough, you sometimes, or *often* preach upon the subject, but every thing that you inculcate, should be directed *constantly* to it, and all that you exhort men to, should be required, *only* as a means of obtaining, and concurring with, that Holy Spirit, which is, and only can be, the *life* and *truth* of goodness. And all that you turn them from, should be as from something that resists, and grieves that blessed spirit of God, which always wills to remove all evil out of our souls, and make us again partakers of the divine nature.

For as they only are Christians, who are born of the spirit, so nothing should be taught Christians, but as a *work* of the spirit; nor any *thing* sought, but by the *power* of the spirit, as well in hearing as teaching. It is owing to the want of this, that there is so much preaching and hearing, and so little benefit either of the preacher or hearer.

The labour of the preacher is, for the most part, to display logic, argument, and eloquence, upon religious subjects; and so he is just as much united to

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God by his own religious discourses, as the pleader at the bar is, by his law, and oratory upon right and wrong.

And the hearers, by their regarding such accomplishments, go away just as much helped, to be new men in Christ Jesus, as by hearing a cause of great equity well pleaded at the bar.

Now in both these cases, with regard to preacher and people, the error is, trusting to a power in themselves; the one in an ability, to persuade powerfully; the other in an ability, to act according to that which they hear.

And so the natural man goes on preaching, and the natural man goes on hearing the things of God, in a fruitless course. And thus it must be, so long as either preacher or hearers, seek any thing else but to edify, and be edified in, and through the immediate power and essential presence of the holy spirit, working in them.

The way therefore to be a faithful, and fruitful labourer in the vineyard of Christ, is to stand yourself in a full dependence on the Spirit of God, as having no power, but as his instrument, and by his influence, in all that you do; and to call others, not to their own strength or rational powers, but to a full hope, and faith of having all that they want, from God alone; calling them to himself, to a birth of essential, inherent goodness, wisdom and holiness from his own eternal word, and holy spirit, living and dwelling in them. For as God is all that the fallen soul wants, so nothing but God alone, can communicate himself to it; all therefore is lost labour, but the total conversion of the soul, to the immediate essential operation of God in it.

As to the other parts of your office, whether they relate to things prescribed, or to such as are to be done, according to your best discretion, there will not be much difficulty, if you stand in the state above described.

As to several outward forms, and orders in the church, they must be supposed to partake, in their degree

degree, of that spirit, which has so long bore rule in all church divisions. But the private man, is not to consider, how outward things should be, according to the primitive plan, but how the inward truth, which is meant by them, may be fully adhered to.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are differently practised in almost every particular church.

But the way to be free from scruples herein, is to keep yourself, and your people wholly intent on that *spiritual good*, of which these institutions are the appointed outward figures, namely that *spiritual regeneration*, which is meant by baptism, and that *spiritual living in Christ*, and Christ in us, which is meant by the supper of the Lord. And then, though the sacraments practised by you should have any outward imperfection in them, they would be of the same benefit to you, as they were to those who used them in their first, outwardly perfect form. And thus you will be led neither to overrate, nor disregard such use of them, as is according to the present state of the church. It is only the inward regenerate Christian, that knows how to make a right use of all outward things. His soul being in such a state of union with God, and man, as it ought to be, takes every thing by the right handle, and turns every thing into a means of carrying on his love towards God and man. To the pure, all things are pure.

When you visit the *sick*, or well *awakened*, or *dully senseless*, go as in obedience to God, as on his errand, and say only what the love of God and man suggests to your heart, without any anxiety about the success of it; that is God's work. Only see that the love, the tenderness, and patience of God towards sinners, be uppermost in all that you do to man. Nothing is to be shewn to man, *but his want of God*; nothing can shew him this so powerfully, so convincingly, as love. And as love is the fulfilling of the whole law, so love is the fulfilling of all the work of the ministry.



L E T T E R III.

To a Clergyman of *Bucks.*

I AM much surprised, my friend, that you should still want more to be said, about the doctrine of *imputation*, whether of *Adam's* sin, or the *righteousness* of *Christ* to his followers. *Cain* could not possibly have any other natural life, than that which was in *Adam*; and therefore so sure as *Adam* in soul, spirit, and body, was all sin and corruption, so sure is it, that all his offspring must come from him in the same depravity of soul, spirit and body. And to talk of their having this disordered fallen nature not from their natural birth, but by an outward imputation, is only, as absurd, as to say, that they have their *hands* and feet, or the whole form of their body not from their natural birth, but by an outward imputation of such a form, and members to them.

As in Adam all die, says the text : Is not this the same, as saying, that all men have their fallen nature, because born of *Adam* ?

Take now the other part of the text, so in *Christ* shall all be made alive. Is it not a flat denial of all this, to say, they are not made alive by a real new birth, but are accounted as if they were alive, by the imputation of *Christ's* life to them ? Could dead *Lazarus* have been said to have been made alive again, if still lying in the grave, he had only been accounted as alive, by having the nature of a living man, imputed to him ?

Our Lord said to a leper, whom he had cleansed, Go, shew thyself to the priest, &c. But if instead of cleansing him, he had bid him go to the priest, to be accounted as a clean man, had he not still been under all the evil of his own leprosy ? Now this is strictly the case of the righteousness of *Christ*, only outwardly

wardly imputed to us.—A fiction, that runs counter to all that Christ and his apostles, have said of the nature of our salvation. We want Christ's righteousness, because by our natural birth, we are inwardly full of evil; therefore saith Christ, *except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. I am the vine, saith Christ, ye are the branches.* Now if this be a true representation of the matter, then these two plain doctrines of Christ, affirming, 1. The absolute necessity of a new birth, and 2. That this birth is as really brought forth in us, as the life of the vine is really in the branches, entirely reject the notion of a righteousness imputed from without.

If Christ's holy nature, be not formed in us, but only outwardly imputed to us, then no virtue, or power of an holy life, can have any more real existence in us, than in the devils, but are only called ours, and not theirs, though we have no more of them within us, than they have. Thus; *be ye holy; for I am holy; be ye perfect, as your Father, which is in heaven, is perfect; thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c.* all these are but vain exhortations. For these virtues are, in their whole nature, nothing else but the very righteousness of Christ, therefore if that can be only outwardly imputed to us, the same must be said of all these virtues. And indeed, unless Christ be truly born in us, we can have no more of any Christian virtue, but the empty name. For neither man, nor angel ever did, or can thus love God with all his heart, be holy because God is holy, be perfect as he is perfect, but because there is a spirit living in them, which is of God, from God, and partakes of the divine nature.

Further, say that the holy spirit is not living in us, that his operation is not inwardly in us, but only outwardly imputed to us, as if he was in us, though he be not: What a blasphemy would this be! And yet full as well, as to say the same of Christ, and his righteousness. For if Christ was only outwardly imputed to us, the same must, of all

necessity be said of the holy spirit; for where Christ is, there is the holy spirit.

Take notice, Sir, that if Christ's righteousness, is only imputed to Christians, then all of them, whether they are called good, or bad, are without any difference as to their inward man, and all under the same unaltered fallen nature, as much after, as they were before. Christ's righteousness was imputed.—

To him that overcometh, saith Christ, will I grant to sit with me on my throne. [N. B.] even as I overcame, and am set down with my father on his throne. What becomes now of the vain fiction of an outward imputation? Is Christ's victory here imputed to us? Is not the contrary as strongly taught us, as words can do it? *To him that over-cometh, even as I also overcame.*

You tell me, my friend, that the seraphic *Aspasio* is quite transported with the thought of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the sinner, and that it should in the account of God, be esteemed as his.—It may be so, transport seems to be as natural to *Aspasio*, as flying is to a bird. But surely, a more transporting, a more glorious thing it is, both to the glory of God, and the good of man, that the sinner is, through the righteous nature of Christ, formed in him, set up again in his first likeness and image of God. For if man's righteousness is not essentially restored in him, as it was essentially in him at the first, has he not less of God in him, by his redemption, than he had at his creation? Is it to the happiness of man, and the glory of God, that God has not obtained that *dwelling* in man, for which he alone created him?

Is it matter of transport to think, that fallen man will to all eternity live destitute of his first heavenly nature, his first divine life, which he had in, and from God? But this must be the case, if Christ's righteousness is only outwardly imputed to him, and not essentially wrought in him.

Transports, my friend, are but poor proofs of truth, or of the goodness of the heart, from whence they

they proceed. *Martyrdom* has had its *fools*, as well as its *saints*, and zealots may live and die in a joy, that has all its strength from delusion.

You may see a man drowned in tears, at beholding a wooden crucifix, and the same man condemning another, as a wicked heretic, who only honours the cross, by being daily baptised into the death of Christ. — Nay, so blind is opinion-zeal, that some good Christian pastors will not scruple to tell you, that they could find no joy in their own state, no strength, or comfort in their labours of love towards their flocks, but because they know, and are assured from *St. Paul*, that God never had, nor ever will have, *mercy on all men*, but that an unknown multitude of them, are through all ages of the world, inevitably decreed by God to eternal damnation, and an unknown number of others, to an irresistible salvation.

Wonder not then, if the *inquisition* has its pious defenders, for *inquisition cruelty*, nay, every barbarity that must have an end, is mere mercy, if compared with this doctrine. — And to be in love with it, to draw sweet comfort from it, and wish it God-speed, is a love that absolutely forbids the loving our neighbour as ourselves, and makes the wish, that all men might be saved, no less than rebellion against God. — It is a *love*, with which, the *curst hater* of all men, would willingly unite and take comfort; for could he know from *St. Paul*, that millions, and millions of mankind, are created and doomed to be his eternal slaves, he might be as content with this doctrine, as some good preachers are, and cease going about, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; as knowing, that his kingdom, was so sufficiently provided for, without any labours of his own.

Oh, the sweetness of *God's election*, crys out the ravished preacher! Oh, the sweetness of *God's reprobation*! might the hellish Satan well say, could he believe that God had made him a *free gift* of such myriads, and myriads of men, of all nations, tongues
and

and languages, from the beginning to the end of the world, and reserved so small a number for himself.

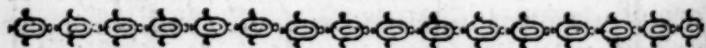
What a complaint, and condemnation is there made in scripture, of those who sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils? And yet this reprobation doctrine, represents God, as sacrificing myriads of his own creatures, made in his own image, to an everlasting hell.

There is not an absurdity of heathenish faith and religion, but what is less shocking than this doctrine, and yet so blindly are some zealous doctors of the gospel bigotted to it, as to set it forth, as the glorious manifestation of the supreme sovereignty of God!

Little children, saith St. John, *let no man deceive you; [N. B.] He that doth righteousness, is righteous, [N. B.] even as he is righteous.* Therefore to expect, or trust to be made righteous, merely by the righteousness of another, outwardly imputed to us, is, according to the apostle, *deceiving ourselves.*

So sure therefore, as the mediation of Christ, is by himself declared to be for this end, *that they all may be one, as thou, father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one;* so sure is it, that an outwardly imputed Christ, is as absurd in itself, and as contrary to scripture, as an outwardly imputed God.

Farewell.



LETTER IV.

To ———

WHEN a man first finds himself stirred up with religious zeal, what does he generally do? He turns all his thoughts *outwards*, he runs after *this*

or *that* man, he is at the beck of every *new opinion*, and thinks only of finding the truth, by resting in this or that society of Christians. Could he find a man, that did not want to have him of his opinion, that turned him from himself to God; not as historically read of in books, but *essentially* living and working in every soul, him he might call a man of God; as saving him from many vain wanderings, from fruitless searchings into a council of *Trent*, a synod of *Dort*, an *Augsb-berg* confession, an *Assembly's* catechism, or a *thirty nine Articles*. For had he an hundred articles, if they were any thing else but a hundred calls to Christ, as the only possible light, and teacher of his mind, it would be a hundred times better for him to be without them.—For all man's misery lies in this, that he has lost the knowledge of God, as living within him, and by falling under the power of an earthly, bestial life, thinks only of God, as living in some other world, and so seeks only by notions, to set up an image of an absent God, instead of worshipping the God of life and power, in whom he lives, moves, and has his being.—Whoever therefore teaches you to expect great things from this, or that sort of opinions, or calls you to any thing as *saving*, and *redeeming*, but the *manifestation* of God in your own soul, through Christ, is totally ignorant of the whole nature, both of the *fall*, and the *redemption* of man.

The Spirit of Christ must live in you, or all exhortations, to walk as he walked, are vain. The natural man is in full separation from this holiness of life, and though he had more wisdom of words, more depth of literature, than was in *Cicero* or *Aristotle*, yet would he have as much to die to, as the greatest Publican, or vainest Pharisee, before he could be in Christ. a new creature. For the highest improved natural abilities, can as well ascend into heaven, or cloath flesh and blood with immortality, as make a man like-minded with Christ in any one divine virtue. And that for this one reason, because God, and divine goodness are inseparable.

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No precept of the gospel supposes man to have any power to effect it, or calls you to any natural ability, or wisdom of your own to comply with it. Christ and his apostles called no man, to overcome the corruption and blindness of fallen nature, by learned cultivation of the mind. The wisdom of the learned world, was the same pitiable foolishness with them, as the grossest ignorance. By them, they only stand thus distinguished, the one brings forth a *Publican*, which is often converted to Christ, the other a *Pharisee*, that for the most part condemns him to be crucified. They (Christ and his apostles) taught nothing but death, and denial to ourselves, and the impossibility of having any one divine temper, but through faith, through a new nature, not *born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

To speak of the operation of the Holy Spirit, as *only an assistance*, or an *occasional assistance*, is as short of the truth, as to say, that Christ shall *only assist* the resurrection of our bodies. For not a spark of any divine virtue can arise up in us, but what must wholly and solely be wrought by that same power, which alone can call our dead bodies out of the dust and darkness of the grave.

If you turn to your own strength to have Christian piety and goodness; or are so deceived, as to think that learning, or local abilities, critical acuteness, skill in languages, church-systems, rules and orders, articles and opinions, are to do that for you which the spirit of Christ did, and only could do for the first Christians; your diligent reading of the history of the gospel, will leave you as poor, and empty and dead to God, as if you had been only a diligent reader of the history of all the religions in the world.

But if all that you trust to, long after, and depend upon, is that Holy Spirit, which alone made the scripture saints able to call *Jesus Lord*; if this be your *one faith*, and *one hope*, the divine life, which died

in *Adam*, will be quickened again in Christ *Jesus*. And be assured, that nothing but this *new birth* can make a gospel Christian, because nothing else can possibly love, do, and be that, which Christ preached in his divine sermon on the *Mount*. Be assured also, that when the spirit of Christ is the spirit that ruleth in you, there will be no *hard sayings* in the gospel; but all that Christ taught in the flesh, will be as meat and drink to you, and you will have no joy, but in walking as he walked, in saying, loving, and doing, that which he said, loved, and did.

Ask then, my friend, no more, where you shall go, or what you shall do, to be in the truth; for you can have the truth, no where but in *Jesus*, nor in him, any farther, than as his holy nature is born within you.

Farewell.



LETTER V.

To a Person of Quality.

Madam,

THERE is nothing more plain and simple than the way of religion. But piety makes little progress till it has no schemes of its own, no thoughts or contrivances to be any thing, but a *naked penitent*, left wholly and solely in *faith* and *hope* to the divine goodness.

Nothing but the life of God, wrought by his holy spirit within us, can be the renewal of our souls, and we shall want this renewal no longer, than whilst we are seeking it in something, that is not God. The faith that ascribes all to God, and expects all from him, cannot be disappointed.

Nothing could hinder the Centurion from having that which he asked of Christ, because his heart could

could thus speak, *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof, speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.*

He that has *this sense* of himself, and *this faith* in God, is in the truth of religion: if we knew the goodness of this state, we should be always content with the simplicity of it, and let every thing else come and go, as it would; all is well and safe, so long as the heart rests all upon God alone.

I do not wonder that the audience of Mr. — is so much increased, since he has preached the doctrine of regeneration among them. All other preaching passes away as a tale that is told, and indeed is nothing better, till it enters into the things within man, brings him to a sensibility of the state of his heart, and its want of God's Holy Spirit therein.



L E T T E R VI.

To Mr. J. T.

My dear worthy Friend,

YOUR letter, though full of complaints about the state of your heart, was very much according to my mind, and gives me great hopes, that God will carry on the good work he has begun in you, and lead you by his holy spirit, through all those difficulties, under which you at present labour.

The desire that you have, to be better than you find yourself at present, is God's call, and will make itself to be more heard within you, if you give but way to it, and reverence it as such, humbly believing that he that calls, will, and only can, help you to pay right and full obedience to it.

You seem to yourself to be all *infatuation and stupidity*, because your head and your heart are so *contrary*.

rary, the one delighting in heavenly notions, the other governed by earthly passions and pursuits. It is happy for you, that you know and acknowledge this: for only through this truth, through the full and deep perception of it, can you have any entrance, or so much as the beginning of an entrance into the liberty of the children of God. God is in this respect dealing with you, as he does with those, whose darkness is to be changed into light. Which can never be done, till you fully know 1. the real badness of your own heart, and 2. your utter inability to deliver yourself from it, by any sense or power, of your own.

And was you in a better state, as to your own thinking, the matter would be worse with you. For the badness in your heart, though you had no sensibility of it, would still be there, and would only be concealed, to your much greater hurt. For there it certainly is, whether it be seen and found, or not, and sooner or later, must shew itself in its full deformity, or the old man will never die the death which must be undergone, before the new man can be formed in us.

All that you complain of in your heart is common to man, as man. There is no heart that is without it. And this is the one ground, why every man, as such, however different in temper, complexion, or natural endowments from others, has one and the same reason, and absolute necessity, of being born again.

Flesh and blood, and the spirit of this world, govern every spring in the heart of the natural man. And therefore you can never enough adore the ray of divine light, which breaking in upon your darkness, has discovered this to be the state of your heart, and raised even those faint wishes you feel to be delivered from it.

For faint as they are, they as certainly proceed from the goodness of God working in your soul, as the first dawning of the morning, is wrought by the same sun, which helps us to the noon-day light.

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Firmly, therefore, believe this, as a certain truth, that the present sensibility of your incapacity for goodness, is to be cherished as a heavenly seed, as the blessed work of God in your soul.

Could you like any thing in your own heart, or fancy any good to be in it, or believe that you had any power of your own to embrace the following truth, this comfortable opinion, would be your turning away from God and all goodness, and building iron walls of separation betwixt God and your soul.

For conversion to God, only then begins to be in truth, when we see nothing that can give us the least degree of hope, of trust, or comfort in any thing, that we are of ourselves.

To see vanity of vanities in all outward things, to loath and abhor certain sins, is indeed something, but yet as nothing, in comparison of seeing and believing the vanity of vanities within us, and ourselves as unable to take one single step in true goodness, as to add one cubit to our stature.

Under this conviction, the gate of life is opened to us. And therefore it is, that all the preparatory parts of religion, all the various proceedings of God either over our *inward*, or *outward* state, setting up and pulling down, giving, and taking away, light and darkness, comfort, and distress, are for this only end, to bring us to this conviction, that all that can be called *life*, *good*, and *happiness*, is to come solely from God, and not the smallest spark of it from ourselves. When man was first created, all the good that he had in him was from God alone. This must be the state of man for ever.—From the beginning of time through all eternity, the creature can have no goodness, but that which God creates in it.

Our first goodness is lost, because our first father departed from a full, absolute dependence upon God. For a full, continual, unwavering dependence upon God, is that alone which keeps God in the creature, and the creature in God.

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Our lost goodness can never come again, till by a power from Christ, we are brought out of ourselves, into that full and blessed dependence upon God, in which our first father should have lived.

What room now, my dear friend, for complaint at the sight, sense, and feeling of your inability to make yourself better? Did you want *this sense*, every part of your religion would only have the nature and vanity of idolatry. For you cannot come unto God, you cannot believe in him, you cannot worship him in spirit and truth, till he is regarded as the *only giver*, and you yourself as nothing else but the receiver of every heavenly good, that can possibly be in you.

God must for ever be God alone; heaven, and the heavenly nature are his, and must for ever be received only from him, and preserved, by an entire dependence upon, and trust in him. Now as all the religion of fallen man, fallen from God into himself, and the spirit of this world, has no other end, but to bring us back to an *entire dependence* upon God; so we may justly say, Blessed is that light, happy is that conviction, which brings us into a full and settled despair, of ever having the least good from ourselves.

Then we are truly brought, and laid at the gate of mercy: At which gate, no soul ever did, or can lie in vain.

A broken and contrite heart God will not despise. That is, God will not pass by, overlook, or disregard it. But the heart is then only broken and contrite, when all its strong holds are broken down, and false coverings taken off, and it sees, with inwardly opened eyes, every thing to be bad, false, and rotten, that does, or can proceed from it as its own.

But you will perhaps, say, that *your conviction* is only an uneasy sensibility of your own state, and has not the goodness of a broken and contrite heart in it.

Let it be so, yet it is right in order to it, and it can only begin, as it begins at present. Your conviction is certainly not full and perfect; for if it was, you would patiently expect, and look for help from God alone.

But whatever is wanting in your conviction, be it what it will, it cannot be added by yourself, nor come any other way, than as the highest degree of the divine life can come.

Know therefore your want of this, as of all other goodness. But know also at the same time, that it cannot be had through your own *willing and running*; but through God that sheweth mercy; that is to say, through God who giveth us Jesus Christ. For Jesus Christ is the *one only mercy* of God to all the fallen world.

Now if all the mercy of God is only to be found in Christ, if he alone can save us from our sins; if he alone has power to heal all our infirmities, and restore original righteousness, what room for any other pains, labour, or enquiry, but *where and how* Christ is to be found.

It matters not what our evils are, deadness, blindness, insatiation, hardness of heart, covetousness, wrath, pride, and ambition, our remedy is always one and the same, always at hand, always certain and infallible. Seven devils are as easily cast out by Christ as one. He came into the world, not to save from this, or that disorder, but to destroy all the power and works of the devil in man.

If you ask *where*, and *how* Christ is to be found? I answer, in your heart, and no where else.

Hear him, reverence him, submit to him as a discoverer and reprover of sin. Own his power and presence in the feeling of your guilt, and then he that wounded, will heal, he that found out the sin, will take it away, and he who shewed you your *den of thieves*, will turn it into a holy temple of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

And now, Sir, you may see, that your doubt whether your will was *really free*, or not, was groundless.

You

You have no freedom, or power of will, to assume any holy temper, or take hold of such degrees of goodness, as you have a mind to. For nothing is, or ever can be goodness in you, but the one *life*, *light*, and *spirit* of Christ, revealed, and formed in your soul. Christ in us, is our only goodness, as Christ in us, is our hope of glory. But Christ in us is the pure free gift of God to us.

But you have a freedom of will, either to give up your helpless self, to the operation of God on your soul, or to rely upon your own *rational* industry, and *natural* strength of mind. This is the freedom in first setting out, which no man wants, or can want so long as he is in the body.

If therefore you have not that which you want to have of God, or are not that which you ought to be in Christ Jesus, it is not because you have no free power of leaving yourself in the hands, and under the operation of God, but because the same freedom of your will, seeks for help where it cannot be had, namely, in some strength of your own.

When this freedom of the will wholly leaves itself to God, saying, *not mine, but thy will be done*, then it hath that, which it willeth. The will of God is done in it. It is in God. It hath divine power. It worketh with God, and by God, and comes at length to be *that faith*, which can remove mountains; and nothing is too hard for it.

And now, my dear friend, let me tell you, that as here lies all the real freedom, which cannot be taken from you, so in the constant exercise of this freedom, that is, in a continual leaving yourself to, and depending upon the operation of God in your soul, lies all your road to heaven. No divine virtue can be had any other way.

All the excellency and power of faith, hope, love, patience, and resignation, have no other root but this *free, full leaving* of yourself to God, and are only so many different expressions of your willing nothing, seeking nothing, trusting to nothing.

but the *life-giving power* of his holy presence in your soul.

To sum up all in a word. Wait patiently, trust humbly, depend only upon, seek solely to a God of light and love, of mercy and goodness, of glory and majesty, dwelling in your heart by faith. There you have the invisible upholder of all the creation, whose blessed operation will always be found by a humble, faithful, loving, calm, patient introversion of your heart to him, which will open itself to you, as soon as your heart is left wholly to his eternal ever-speaking word, and ever-sanctifying spirit.

Beware of the eagerness of your own natural temper. Run not in any hasty ways of your own. Be patient under the sense of your own vanity and weakness; and patiently wait for God to do his own work in his own way. For you can go no faster than a full dependence upon God can carry you.

You will perhaps say, Am I then to be idle, and do nothing towards the salvation of my soul? No, you must by no means be idle, be but earnestly diligent, according to your measure, in all good works, which the law and the gospel direct you to, both with regard to yourself, and other people.

Outward good works to other people, may be justly considered as God's errand on which you are sent, and therefore to be done faithfully, according to the will, and in obedience to him that sent you.

But nothing that you do, is in its proper state, or reaches its true end, till you do not depend upon any *doing* that which is good, but by Christ, the wisdom and power of God. I caution you only against all eagerness of spirit, so far as it leads you to seek, and trust to something that is not God.

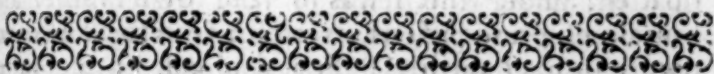
I recommend to you stillness, calmness, patience, not to make you lifeless, and indifferent about good works, or indeed with any regard to them, but solely with regard to your faith, that it may have its proper soil to grow in, and because all eagerness, restlessness, haste, and impatience, either with re-

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ward to God, or ourselves, are not only great hindrances, but real defects of our faith and dependence upon God.

Lastly, be courageous, and full of hope; not by looking at any strength of your own; no, this will only help you to find more and more defects and weakness in yourself; but be courageous in faith, and hope, and dependence upon God. And be assured, that the one infallible way to all that is good, is never to be weary in waiting, trusting, and depending upon God manifested in Christ Jesus.

*I am your hearty friend
and well-wisher.*



LETTER VII.

To a Person burdened with inward and outward Troubles.

Worthy Sir,

MY heart embraces you, with all the tenderness and affection of Christian love; and I earnestly beg of God, to make me a messenger of his peace to your soul.

You seem to apprehend, I may be much surprized at the account you have given of yourself; but I am neither surprized, nor offended at it; I neither condemn, nor lament your estate, but shall endeavour to shew you, how soon it may be made a blessing and happiness to you. In order to which, I shall not enter into a consideration of the different kinds of trouble you have set forth at large. I think it better to lay before you the ground and root, from whence all the evils of human life have sprung. This will make it easy for you to see, what that is, which only can, be the full remedy for all.

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The scripture has assured us, that God made man in *his own image and likeness*; a sufficient proof, that man, in his first state, as he came forth from God, must have been absolutely free from all vanity, want, or distress; from any thing either within, or without him.—It would be absurd, to suppose, that a creature beginning to exist in the image of God, should have vanity of life, or vexation of spirit: a god-like perfection of nature, and a painful, distressed nature, stand in the utmost contrariety to one another.

Again, the scripture has assured us, *that man that is born of a woman, hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery*: Therefore man now is not the creature that he was by his creation. The first god-like nature of *Adam*, which was to have been immortally holy in union with God, is lost; and instead of it, a poor mortal of earthly flesh and blood, born like a wild ass's colt, of a short life, and full of misery, is through a vain pilgrimage, to end in dust and ashes. Therefore, let every evil, whether inward, or outward, teach you that man has lost his first life in God; and that no comfort, or deliverance is to be expected, but only in this one thing, that though man had lost his God, yet God is become man, that man may be again alive in God.

Now here are two things raised up in man, instead of the *life of God*; *First, selfishness*, brought forth by his chusing to have a wisdom of *his own*, contrary to the will and instruction of his Creator. *Secondly*, an earthly, bestial life, brought forth by his eating that food, which was poison to his paradisaical nature. Both these must therefore be removed; that is, a man must totally die to himself, and all earthly desires, views, and intentions, before he can be again in God.

But now if this be an immutable truth, that man, so long as he is a *selfish earthly-minded* creature, must be deprived of his true life, the life of God, in his soul; then how is the face of things changed! For then, what life is so much dreaded as a life of worldly ease and prosperity? What a curse, is there in every

every thing that gratifies and nourishes our self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking? On the other hand, what happiness is there in all inward and outward troubles, when they force us to know the hell that is within us, and the vanity of every thing without us, when they turn all our self-love into self-abhorrence, and force us to call upon God to save us from ourselves, to give us a new life, and new spirit in *Christ Jesus*.

"O happy famine," might the poor prodigal have said, "which, by reducing me to eat husks with swine, brought me to myself, and caused my return to my first happiness in my father's house."

Now, I will suppose your state to be as you represent it; inwardly, heaviness, and confusion of thoughts and passions; outwardly, ill-usage from friends, relations, and all the world; with an inability to strike out the least spark of light or comfort, by any thought or reasoning of your own.

O happy famine, which leaves you not so much as the husk of one human comfort to feed upon! For this is the time and place for all that life and salvation to happen to you, which happened to the prodigal son. Your way is as short, and your success as certain as his was: you have no more to do than he had; you need not call out for books, or methods of devotion; for, in your present state, much reading, and borrowed prayers, are not your best method; all that you are to offer to God, all that is to help you to find him to be your Saviour and Redeemer, is best taught by the distressed state of your heart.

Only let your present and past distress make you feel and acknowledge this two-fold great truth: *First*, That in and of yourself, you are nothing but darkness, vanity, and misery; *Secondly*, that of yourself, you can no more help yourself to light and comfort, than you can create an angel. People at all times seem to assent to these truths; but then it is an assent that has no depth or reality, and so is of little or no use: but your condition has opened your heart for a full conversion

viction of them. Now give way, I beseech you, to this conviction, and hold these two truths, in the same degree of certainty as you know two and two to be four, and then you are with the prodigal come to yourself, and above half your work is done.

Being now in the full possession of these two truths feeling them, as you feel your own existence, you are to give up yourself entirely to God in Christ Jesus, as into the hands of infinite love; firmly believing that God has no will towards you, but that of *infinite love*, and infinite desire to make you a partaker of his divine nature; and that it is as impossible for the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to refuse all that life and salvation which you want, as it is for you to take it by your own power.

O drink deep of *this cup*! for the precious water of eternal life is in it. Turn unto God with *this faith* cast yourself into this *abyss of love*: and then you will be in that state the prodigal was in, when he said, *I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son*; and all that will be fulfilled in you, which is related of him.

Make this, therefore, the twofold exercise of your heart: *Now*, bowing yourself down before God in the deepest sense and acknowledgment of your own nothingness and vileness; *then*, looking up unto God in faith and love, consider him as always extending the arms of his mercy towards you, and full of an infinite desire to dwell in you, as he dwells in angels in heaven. Content yourself with this simple exercise of your heart, for a while; and seek nothing in any book, but that which nourishes it.

Come unto me, says the holy Jesus, *all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you*. Here is more for you to live upon, more light for your mind, more of unction for your heart, than in volumes of human instruction. Pick up the words of the holy Jesus, and beg of him to be the light and life of your soul: love the sound of his name: for Jesus is the love, the sweetness, the compassionate goodness, of the

Deity itself; which became man, that so men might have power to become the sons of God. Love and unity and wish well to every soul in the world; dwell in love, and then you dwell in God; hate nothing but the evil that stirs in your own heart.

Teach your heart this prayer, till your heart continually saith, though not with outward words; "O holy Jesus: meek lamb of God! Bread that came down from heaven! Light and life of all holy souls! help me to a true and living faith in thee. O do thou open thyself *within me*, with all thy holy nature, spirit, tempers, and inclinations, that I may be born again of thee, quickened and revived, led and governed by thy holy spirit."

Prayer so practised, becomes the *life of the soul*, and the true *food of eternity*. Keep in this state of application to God; and then you will infallibly find it to be the true way of rising out of the vanity of time, into the riches of eternity.

The poverty of our fallen nature, the depraved workings of flesh and blood, cannot destroy us, so long as the *spirit of prayer* works contrary to them, and longs for the light and spirit of heaven. Our natural evil loses its poison and death, and only becomes our *holy cross*, on which we happily die from ourselves and this world, into the kingdom of heaven.

Would you have done with error, scruple, and delusion? Consider the Deity to be the greatest love, the greatest meekness, the greatest sweetness, the eternal unchangeable will to be a good and blessing to every creature; and that all the misery, darkness, and death of fallen angels and fallen men, consist in their having lost their *likeness to this divine nature*. Consider yourself and all the fallen world, as having nothing to wish for, but by the *spirit of prayer* to draw into your soul this divine, meek, loving, nature of God. Consider the holy Jesus as the *gift of God* to your soul, to begin and finish this within you, in spite of every inward or outward enemy. These three infallible truths, heartily embraced, and made the nourishment of your soul, shorten and secure the way to heaven

heaven, and leave no room for error, scruple, or delusion.

Expect no life, strength, or comfort, but from the spirit of God, dwelling and manifesting his own goodness in your soul. The best of men, and the best of books, can only do you good, so far as they turn you from themselves, and every human thing, to seek and receive every kind of good from God alone; not a distant, or an absent God, but a God living, moving, and working in your inmost soul.

They never find God, who seek for him by reasoning; for since God is the highest spirit, nothing but a like spirit can unite with him, find or feel, or know any thing of him. Hence it is, that faith and hope, turned towards God, are the only possible means of obtaining a true knowledge of him. And the reason is plain, it is because by these *holy tempers*, which are the workings of his *spirit* within us, we seek the God of life *where he is*, we call upon him with his *own voice*, we draw near to him by his *own spirit*; for nothing can breathe forth faith and hope, but that spirit which is of God, and which therefore through flesh and blood thus presses towards him, and readily unites with him.

There is not a more infallible truth in the world than this, *that neither reasoning nor learning can ever introduce a spark of heaven into our souls*: But if this be so, then you have nothing to seek, nor any thing to fear, from reason. *Life and death* are the things in question: they are neither of them the growth of reasoning or learning, but each of them is a state of the soul, and only thus differ, *Death is the want, and life the enjoyment of its highest good*. Reason, therefore, and learning, have no power here; but only by their vain activity to keep the soul insensible of that life and death, one of which is always growing up in it, according to the desire of the heart.

Add reason to a vegetable, and you add nothing to its life or death. Its life and fruitfulness lieth in the soundness of its root, the goodness of the soil, and the riches it derives from air and light. Heaven and
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hell grow thus in the soul of man: his heart is his root; if that is turned from all evil, it is then like a plant in a good soil; when it hungers and thirsts after the divine life, it then infallibly draws the light and spirit of God into it, which are infinitely more ready to live and fructify in the soul, than light and air to enter into the plant that hungers after them. For the soul hath its breath, and being, and life, for no other end, but that the TRIUNE God may manifest the riches and powers of his own life in it.

Thus you see, and feel, that the *spirit of prayer* is your certain way of returning to God.

When, therefore it is the one ruling desire of our hearts, that God may be the *beginning* and *end*, the *reason* and *motive*, the *rule* and *measure*, of our doing, or not doing, from morning to night; then every where, whether speaking or silent, whether inwardly or outwardly employed, we are equally offered up to the eternal spirit, have our life in him, and from him, and are united to him, by that *spirit of prayer*, which is the comfort, the support, the strength and security of the soul, travelling by the help of God, through the vanity of time into the riches of eternity. For this *spirit of prayer*, let us willingly give up all that we inherit from our fallen father, to be all *hunger* and *thirst* after God: and to have no thought or care, but how to be wholly his devoted instruments; every where, and in every thing, his adoring, joyful, and thankful servants. Have your eyes shut, and ears stopped to every thing, that is not a step in that ladder that reaches from earth to heaven.

Reading is good, hearing is good, conversation and meditation are good; but then they are only good at proper times and occasions. But the *spirit of prayer* is for all times, and all occasions; it is a lamp that is to be always burning, a light to be ever shining; every thing calls for it, every thing is to be done in it, and governed by it; because it is, and means, and wills nothing else but the whole soul, incessantly given up to God, to be *where*, and *what*, and *how* he pleases.

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This state of absolute resignation, naked faith, and pure love of God is the highest perfection, of those who are born again, and through the divine power become sons of God : and it is neither more nor less, than what our blessed Redeemer has called us to in these words: *Thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven.* It is to be sought for in the simplicity of a little child, without being captivated with any mysterious depths or heights of speculation; without coveting any knowledge, but so far as it brings us nearer to God, forces us to forget and renounce every thing for him; to do every thing in him, with him, and for him; and to give every breathing, moving, intention, and desire of our heart, and life to him.

Let every creature have your love. Love with its fruits of meekness, patience, and humility, is all that we can wish for to ourselves, and our fellow creatures; for this is to live in God, united to him, both for time and eternity.

To desire to communicate good to every creature, in the degree we can, is a divine temper; for thus God stands unchangeably disposed towards the whole creation; but let me add my request, as you value the peace which God has wrought by his Holy Spirit in you, as you desire to be continually taught by an unction from above, that you would on no account enter into any dispute with any one, about the truths of salvation: give them every help, but that of debating with them; for no man has fitness for the light of the gospel, till he finds an hunger and thirst, and want of something better, than that which he has and is by nature. Yet we ought not to check our inclinations to help others in every way we can. Only do what you do, as a work of God; and then, whatever may be the event, you will have reason to be content with the success that God gives it.

The next thing that belongs to us, and which is also godlike, is a true patience and meekness, shewing every kind of goodwill and tender affection towards those that turn a deaf ear to us; looking upon

it to be full as contrary to God's method, and the good state of our own heart, to dispute with any one in contentious words, as to fight with him for the truths of salvation.

We are apt to consider parts and abilities, as the proper qualifications for the reception of divine truths; and wonder that a man of a fine understanding should not immediately embrace just and solid doctrines: but the matter is quite otherwise. Had man kept possession of his first glorious state, there had been no foundation for the gospel redemption; and the doctrine of the cross, must have appeared quite unreasonable: and therefore says our Lord, *To the poor the gospel is preached.* It is to them, and none else: That is, to poor fallen man, that has lost all the riches of his first divine life. But if a man knows and feels nothing of this poverty, he is not that person to whom the gospel belongs: it has no more suitableness to his state, than it had to man unfallen: and then the greater his parts, the better is he qualified to shew the folly of that salvation, whereof he has no want.

Such a man, though he may be of an humane, generous nature, of lively parts and much candour, is nevertheless entirely ignorant of the depth of the heart of man, and the necessities of human nature. As yet (though he knows it not) he is only at play, pleasing himself with supposed deep enquiries after truth, whilst he is only sporting himself with lively, wandering images of this and that, just as they happen to start up in his mind. Could but he see himself in the state of the poor distressed prodigal son, and find that himself is the very person there recorded, he would then, see the fitness of that redemption, which is offered him by the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. But such an one, alas! is rich; he is sound; light is in his own power, goodness is in his own possession: he feels no distress or darkness; but has a crucible of reason and judgment, that on every occasion separates gold from dross; and, therefore, he must be left to himself, to his own elysium, 'till something

something more than argument as awakens him out of these golden dreams.

All preachers of the true spiritual gospel, of a birth, and life from above, by Jesus Christ, ever were, and will be, treated by the reigning fashionable orthodoxy, as enemies to the outward gospel, and its services, just as the prophets of God were by the then reigning orthodoxy, condemned and despised, for calling people to a spiritual meaning of the letter, to a holiness infinitely greater than that of their outward sacrifices, types, and ceremonies.

The sect of the Pharisees did not cease with the *Jewish* church : it only lost its old name ; it is still in being, and springs now from the gospel, as it did then from the law : it has the same place, lives the same life, does the same work, minds the same things, has the same religious honour, and claim to piety, in the Christian, as it had in the *Jewish* church, and as much mistakes the depths of the gospel, as that sect mistook the meaning of the law and the prophets.

It would be easy to shew how the leaven of that sect works among us, just as it did among them. *Have any of the rulers believed on him ?* was the orthodox question of the antient Pharisees. Now we readily condemn the folly of that question ; and yet who does not see, that, for the most part, both priest and people, in every Christian country, live and govern themselves by the folly of the very same spirit which put that question : for when God, as he has always done from the beginning of the world, raises up private and illiterate persons, full of light and wisdom from above, so as to be able to discover the workings of the mystery of iniquity, and to open the absolute necessity of such an inward spirit and life of Christ, as carnal wisdom, and worldly policy have departed from ; when this is done, by the weakest instruments in such simplicity and fulness, as may be justly deemed a miracle : do not clergy and laity get rid of it all, merely by the strength of the good old question, "*Have any of the rulers believed and taught these things?*"

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Hath the church in council or convocation? Hath Calvin, Luther, Zuinglius, or any of our renowned system-makers, ever taught or asserted these matters?"

But hear what our blessed Lord saith, of the place and origin of truth: he refers us not to the current doctrines of the times: *My sheep*, says he, *hear my voice*. Here the whole matter is determined, both where truth is, and who they are that can have any knowledge of it.

Heavenly truth is no where spoke but by the voice of Christ, nor heard but by a power of Christ in the hearer. As he is the only word of God, that speaks forth all the wisdom, and wonders of God; so he alone is the word, that speaks forth all the life, wisdom, and goodness, that can be in any creature; it can have none but what it has in him and from him: this is the one unchangeable boundary of truth, goodness, and every perfection of men on earth, or angels in heaven.

Literary learning, from the beginning to the end of time, will have no more of heavenly wisdom, nor any less of worldly foolishness in it, at one time than at another; its nature is the same through all ages; what it was in the *Jew*, that same it is in the Christian. Its name, as well as nature, is unalterable, viz. foolishness with God.

I shall add no more, but the two or three following words.

I. Receive every inward and outward trouble, every disappointment, pain, uneasiness, temptation, with both thy hands, as a blessed occasion of dying to thyself, and entering into a fuller fellowship with thy self-denying, suffering Saviour.

II. Look at no inward or outward trouble in any other view; reject every other thought about it; and then every kind of trial and distress will become the blessed day of thy prosperity.

III. Be afraid of seeking or finding comfort in any thing, but God alone: for that which gives thee comfort, takes so much of thy heart from God.

What is a pure heart? One to which God alone

is totally, and purely sufficient; to which nothing relishes, or gives delight, but God alone."

IV. That state is best, which exerciseth the highest faith in, and fullest resignation to God.

V. What is it you want and seek, but that God *may be all in all in you*? But how can this be, unless all worldly good and evil become as nothing to you?

"O my soul! abstract thyself from every thing. What hast thou to do with changeable creatures? Waiting and expecting thy bridegroom, who is the author of all creatures, let it be thy sole concern, that he may find thy heart free and disengaged, as often as it shall please him to visit thee."

Be assured of this, that sooner or later, we must be brought to this conviction, that every thing in ourselves by nature is evil, and must be entirely given up; and that nothing that is created, can make us better than we are by nature. Happy, therefore, and blessed are all those inward or outward troubles, that hasten this conviction in us; that with the whole strength of our souls, we may be driven to seek *all* from and in God, without the least thought, hope, or contrivance after any other relief: Then it is, that we are made truly partakers of the cross of Christ; and from the bottom of our hearts shall be enabled to say, with *St. Paul*, *God forbid that I should glory in any thing, save the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by which I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me.*

Give up yourself to God without reserve. This implies such a state of heart, as does nothing of itself, from its own reason, will or choice, but stands always in an absolute dependence upon being led by the spirit of God into every thing that is according to his will; in singleness of heart, meeting every thing that every day brings forth, as something that comes from God, and is to be received, and gone through by you, in such an heavenly use of it, as you would suppose the holy Jesus would have done, in such occurrences.—This is an attainable degree of

of perfection ; and by having Christ and his spirit always in your eye, and nothing else, you will never be left to yourself, nor without the full guidance of God.



L E T T E R VII.

To Mr. T. L.

IT matters not my friend, what you are upon, whether you would save a man from *deism, debauchery, or suicide* ; you must begin in the same place, from one and the same ground, and this as unavoidably, as every fruit must have its beginning from the root, and from the root in its right state.

The amiableness of any virtue, or the horrid nature of any vice, whilst only considered as in themselves, are but as pictures set before our eyes, and have no other effect upon us. And this is the unprofitableness of all *moral instructions*, whether Heathen, or Christian.

If you can help a man to seek, and find, and know himself, and his real relation to God ; to know that he has neither inward, nor outward evil, but because he has lost his *true state*, and place in God ; and that therefore nothing can be his peace and happiness, but his first divine life, restored again in him, then you have done all that you can for him, whatever his malady is.

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L E T T E R VIII.

To the same.

My dear Friend;

THE variety of trials, you have lately met with, are but a specimen of what you are to expect, in some form or other, so long as you breathe the air of this fallen world.—The longer we are without them, the more our need of them is increased. And they never give great smart, but where something is to be torn off, that sticks too close to us.—One reflection upon these sacred words, “ My kingdom is not of this world :—The son of man hath not where to lay his head,” are sufficient to take not only the sting out of every cross, that can here befall us, but even to make us afraid, and ashamed of being pleased with any thing, that has the name of worldly honour, and prosperity.

You have no reason to wonder at any thing you see, or hear, of the partiality, selfishness, envy, and enmity, that so often breaks out between brothers and sisters of the same blood.—For if *blood-relations*, considered as such, could have any true goodness, or unselfish regard to one another, we should not be under the necessity of being born again.

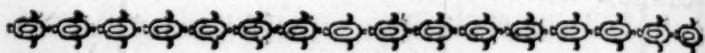
Will it do you any good to tell you, that thus says my heart, without speaking a word, “ *Let nothing live in me, but the redeeming power of thy holy Jesus, nothing pray in me but thy holy spirit.*—This is my ship, in which I would be always at sea.—All that I seek, or mean, either for myself or others, by every height and depth of divine knowledge, is only for this end, that we may be more willing, and glad to become

become such little children, as our Lord has told us, are the only heirs of the kingdom of God.

The piercing critic may, and naturally will grow in pride, as fast, as his skill in words discovers itself. And every kind of knowledge, that shews the scholar, the orator, the disputer, the commentator, the historian, his *own powers* and *abilities*, are the *same* temptation to him, that *Eve* had from the serpent; and he will get no more good by the love and relish of such knowledge, then she got by her love of the tree, that was so desirable to make one wise.

But he whose eyes are opened, to see into this *mystery of all things*, sees nothing but death to himself, and to every thing, that he had called, or delighted in as his own. This is the *bold depth* of his knowledge. And if you would know its *aspiring height*, it consists in learning to know, that which the angels and twenty-four elders about the throne of God, knew, when they cast down their crowns before him, that sat on the throne, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, thou art worthy to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.—It is to know, that the triune majesty of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are the threefold power, life, glory, and perfection of every creature that sings praises to God, in heaven and in earth. This is the *proud* knowledge of those, who are let into the holy of holies. Which goes no deeper, than to see the *Nothingness* of man, ascends no higher, than to know that God is *all*; which begets nothing in man, but that which was begotten in *Paul*, when he cried out, *God forbid, that I should glory in any thing, but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

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L E T T E R IX.

To G. W.

THE large account you have given of yourself, is very affecting, and I hope God will turn all the variety of your past distress, into means of a future solid peace, and rest in his divine love.

To be weary and heavy laden, is to have the highest fitness to receive that rest, that Christ alone can give. These are the persons that he called to him, when he was upon earth. They who are content with themselves, are in the utmost danger of never knowing that happiness, for which they were created.

For a while, consider yourself in such solitude, as if there was only God and you in the world, free from every thought, but that of desiring to be wholly and solely his, and looking wholly to his goodness, to be delivered out of the misery of your fallen state.

Be not too eager about much reading: Nor read any thing, but that which nourishes, strengthens, and establishes this faith in you, of an inward Saviour, who is the life of your soul. To grow up in this faith, is taking the best means, of attaining to knowledge in all divine matters.

Cast away all reflections about the world. And let all be swallowed up in this joyful thought, that you have found the Messiah, the Saviour of the world, not in books, but in your own soul. Give yourself up to this, expect all from it, let it be the humble, faithful, longing desire of your heart, and desire no knowledge, but that which proceeds from it. Stand only

only in this thirst of knowledge, and then all that you know will be spirit and life.

With a heart full of good wishes to you,

I am,

Your's, &c.



L E T T E R X.

To Mr. T. L.

My dear L.

TAMPER with no physicians, but content yourself, to have that share of health, which a regular and good life can help you to.—Reflect not upon your predominant complexion, or how long it will be, before you get from under its power.—St. Paul wanted to be delivered from his thorn in the flesh. He had all he prayed for, though the thorn might continue, when God said to him, *My grace is sufficient for thee*; this was better to him, than if his thorn had been taken from him.—This enabled him to say, *I will glory in my infirmities*; for *when I am weak, then I am strong*. You believe, that if it was not for earnest and continual prayer, your turn to melancholy would get the better of you.—You cannot believe this too much, for nothing else can preserve you, from being led away by every other evil temper. But let resignation to God, be the predominant part of your Spirit of Prayer; it is not so much ardent desires, as humble resignation to be as God pleases, that keeps the heart in the highest union with him.—Faith and hope and love get their best strength, when resignation is the salt where-with they are seasoned.

You think, if you was to live an hundred years in an *abstracted contemplation*, some property of nature,

ture, would still be occasionally breaking forth in you.—What occasion had you, my friend, to make this complaint about such a contemplation?

You have no business with it, nor any reason to expect it should do any thing for you.—Had you changed your words, and said, I believe if I was for a hundred years to be wholly trusting in, and depending upon God, to do that for me, which he has promised to do for all that trust in him, it would not be done:—Had you expressed your complaint in these words, you would have seen, that neither faith, nor hope, nor love, nor resignation, would have allowed you to make it.—Look at yourself, at the power of time, or any thing that this or that complexion does, and then you may be afraid of everything; but look at God, as him that is to do all for you, and in you, and then you need be afraid of nothing.—A thorn, or no thorn, bad or good blood, with all its effects, loose all their difference, as soon as you know, that you are not your own, nor left to yourself to seek a physician, that will not leave you unhealed.

We know that all things must work together for good, to them that love God. Now what signifies what the things are, if we are to have the same good from them, be they what they will? Let complexion shew itself, let the dead ashes of old sins, seem to be ready to come to life again, what is all this, but helping us to be more alive unto God? Therefore rejoice evermore, in every thing give thanks, and call nothing but this, *abstracted contemplation.*

Farewel.

L E T.



L E T T E R X I.

To a Clergyman of Westmoreland.

Reverend Sir,

ADAM's turning from God, to hear the voice of his own *reason* and *imagination*, and the suggestions of a satanical serpent, was that which created in him a new hardened heart, bold enough to eat of the forbidden tree.—Now this rise of the first sin, demonstrates how the matter stands between God and every sinner, to the end of the world. The whole nature of God, his one unalterable will and work, stands in the same full opposition and contrariety to every work of sin in every man, as it did to *Adam's* first transgression.—And that which God did to prevent the first sin, saying to *Adam*, *Eat not*, that same voice of love, keeps saying, to every son of *Adam*, *sin not*.

Yet so wise in the ways of God, are some divinity-students, as to teach and preach, that the whole world through its thousands of years, has been bringing forth its millions of myriads of sinners all round the globe, who as soon as they have done with the vanity and misery of this world, are to be roaring in the hottest fire of an eternal hell. For what? Why, because they have been just as wicked, as the decrees of God required and forced them to be. And also through every age of the world, there hath always been a little number of righteous, who were to go to heaven, which number had no littleness in it, but because God would not suffer it to be greater.

Can a charge like this be brought against Satan? Nay, doth it not even free Satan from all the evil that is charged upon him, and make him, though

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going about as a roaring lion, to be as insignificant a tool in the work of sin, as the preacher is in the work of godliness, though with ever so loud a voice, he beseeches the *reprobate* to be reconciled to God, or with tears in his eyes, exhorts the *elect* not to depart from him?

You once, I remember, said to me, that you thought I over did the matter, in my censure upon learning.—Let learning therefore speak for itself. Let its own works praise it. What has it done? What has brought forth a *multiplicity* of churches, but that very same acuteness of learning, which asserts and proves there is but *one*? Whence comes transubstantiation, election, reprobation, insignificance of works, socinianism, arianism, but from that knowledge of history, and critical skill in words, which is the glory of the learned world.

Without me ye can do nothing, saith Christ.—*That which a man soweth, that shall he reap*, saith the apostle. Truths like these, of which the scripture is full, would keep all believers in the true church, attentive to the one thing needful, had not a learning, falsely so called, filled all eyes with the dust of darkness.

Now, Sir, be as sober as you will about the use and power of learning, logic, and eloquence, in the doctrines of salvation; condemn the bad use that heretics, schismatics, arians and socinians have made of them; yet let me whisper this truth into your ear, that you will never be delivered from the delusion and cheat of your own learning, till by a light risen up within you, you come to see, and know, that you want no more learning, to change you from a sinner into a saint, than *Mary Magdalene* did.

God said to *Abraham*, *Walk before me, and be thou perfect*. This was the *Hebrew school*, in which the father of the *fruitful*, was to learn to be perfect.—But here now comes the scholar-critic, and finds, that matters stand not thus now, because the glo-

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rious light of the gospel (he says) has discovered that all lies in an *election* and *reprobation*, and that salvation and damnation come from nothing else, the apostle expressly saying, *It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*—What a learned strife has there been about the meaning of these words? And yet they mean not one jot more or less, than when the apostle saith, *The natural man knoweth not the things of the spirit, neither can he know them.*—All that is in the one text, is in the other; and both of them say only this one great and good truth, that the creature can have no divine life, light, goodness, and happiness, but from *that*, which the holy tri-une God is, and operates in it.

Farewel.

EXTRACT

ML. E. W. S.

A. B. R. S.

C. E. R. G. Y.



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AN
EXTRACT
FROM
Mr. *L A W*'s
ADDRESS
TO THE
CLERGY.

Published a little after his Death.





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A D D R E S S
T O T H E
C L E R G Y.

THE reason of my addressing this discourse to the clergy, is not, because it treats of things not of common concern to all Christians, but chiefly to induce them, as far as I can, to the serious perusal of it; and because whatever is *essential* to Christian salvation, if either neglected, or mistaken by them, is of the saddest consequence both to themselves, and the churches in which they minister.—I say *essential* to salvation, for I would not turn my own thoughts, or call the attention of Christians to any thing, but the *one thing* needful, the one thing *essential*, and only *available*, to our rising out of our fallen state, and becoming, as we were at our creation, an holy offspring of God, and real partakers of the divine nature.

If it be asked, What this one thing is? It is the SPIRIT of GOD WORKING SPIRITUAL LIFE IN US. Nothing else is wanted by us, nothing else intended for us by the law, the prophets, and the gospel. Nothing else is, or can be effectual, to the making sinful man become again a godly creature.

Every thing else, however glorious and divine in outward appearance, every thing, that angels, men,
churches

churches or reformatiōns, can do for us, is dead and helpless, but so far as it is, the immediate work of the Spirit of God, breathing, and living in it.

All Scripture bears full witness to this truth, and the design of all that is written, is only to call us back from the power of Satan, the flesh and the world, to be again under full dependence upon, and obedience to the Spirit of God. When this is done, all is done, *that the scripture can do for us.*—Read what chapter, or doctrine of scripture you will, be ever so delighted with it, it will leave you as poor, as empty, and unreformed, as it found you, unless it be a delight that has turned you to the Spirit of God, and strengthened your union with, and dependence upon him. For if it be an immutable truth, that *no man can call Jesus, Lord, but by the Holy Ghost*, it must be a truth equally immutable, that no one can have any one *Christ-like* temper, but so far as he is immediately led, and governed by the Holy Spirit.

The reasons of which, are as follow.

All possible goodness was in God from all eternity, and must to all eternity be *inseparable* from him. As therefore before God created any thing, it was certainly true, that there was but *one that was good*; so it is just the same truth, after God has created innumerable hosts of blessed, holy, and heavenly beings, that there is but *one that is good*, and that is God.

All that can be called goodness, or holiness, in the creatures, is no more their own, or the growth of their created powers, than they were their own, before they were created. But all that is called goodness in the creature, is nothing else but the *one* goodness of God manifesting itself in the creature, according as its created nature is fitted to receive it. This is the unalterable state between God and the creature: goodness, for ever and ever, can only belong to God, as *essential* to him, and *inseparable* from him.

God could not make the creature to be great and glorious *in itself*; this is as impossible, as for God to create beings into a state of *independence* on himself. *The heavens, saith David, declare the glory of God; and no creature,*

creature, any more than the heavens can declare any other glory, but that of God. And as well might it be said, *that the firmament sheweth forth its own handy-work*, as that a holy, divine, or heavenly creature, sheweth forth its own natural power.

But if all that is great, glorious, and happy, in the spirits, tempers, and enjoyments of the creature, is only so much of the greatness, glory, majesty, and blessedness of God, dwelling in it, and displaying his own triune *light, life, and love*, in and through the manifold forms, and capacities of the creature, then we may infallibly see the true ground and nature of all true religion. For the creatures true religion is its rendering to God all that is God's, it is its continual acknowledging all that which it is, and has, and enjoys, in and from God. This is the one true religion of all intelligent creatures, whether in heaven, or on earth; for as they all have the *same relation* to God, so though ever so different in their states or offices, they all have but one and the same true religion, or right behaviour towards God. Now the *one religion*, between God and all intelligent creatures, is this, a *total, unalterable dependence upon God*, an *immediate, continual receiving of every kind, and degree of goodness, blessing, and happiness, that ever was, or can be found in them, from God alone*. The highest angel has nothing of its own, that it can offer to God, no more light, love, purity, perfection, that spring from itself, or its own powers, than the poorest creature upon earth.

Could the angel see a *spark* of wisdom, goodness, or excellence, as coming from, or belonging to *its self*, its place in heaven would be lost, as sure as *Lucifer* lost his. But they are ever abiding flames of pure love, always ascending up to, and uniting with God, for this reason, because the wisdom, the power, the glory, the majesty, the love, and goodness of God *alone*, is all that they see, and feel, and know, either within, or without themselves.—Songs of praise to their heavenly father, are their ravishing delight, because they see, and know, and feel, that
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it is the *breath* and *spirit* of their heavenly father that *sings* and *rejoices* in them.—Their adoration in spirit and in truth never ceases, because they never cease to acknowledge the ALL of God;—the ALL of God in themselves, and the ALL of God in the whole creation. This is the one religion of heaven, and nothing else is the truth of religion on earth.

The matter plainly comes to this. Nothing can be *religion* to the intelligent creature, but the power and presence of God, *really* and *essentially* living and working in it. But if this be the unchangeable nature of religion, then of necessity, the creature must have all its *religious* goodness, as wholly and solely from God's *immediate operation*, as it had its first goodness at its creation. And it is the same impossibility for the creature to help itself to religion, by any contrivance, reasonings, or workings of its own natural powers, as to create itself. For the creature after its creation, can no more take any thing to itself, that belongs to God, than it could take it before it was created. And as the natural powers of the creature could only come from the *one power* of God, so that which *comforts*, which *enlightens*, which *bleses*, which gives peace, joy, goodness, and rest to its natural powers, can be had in no other way, nor by any other thing, but from God's immediate, holy operation in it.

All true religion is, an essential union, and communion of the spirit of the creature, with the spirit of the Creator: God in it, and it in God, one life, one light, one love. The spirit of God first sows the seed of divine union in the soul of every man; and religion is *That*, by which it is quickened, and brought to a fullness of life in God.—Take a similitude of this.—The beginning of animal breath, springs in the creature from the Spirit of this world, and the respiration, keeps up an essential union of the animal life with the spirit of this world. In like manner, faith, hope, love, and resignation to God, are in the religious life, its acts of respiration, which

which unite God and the creature, in the same essential manner, as animal respiration, unites the breath of the animal, with the breath of this world.

Now as no animal could *begin* to respire, but because it had its beginning to breathe, from the air of this world, so no creature, angel or man, could *begin* to be religious, or breathe forth faith, love, and desire towards God, but because these divine affections were by the spirit of God begotten in it.—And as a tree or plant can only grow, and fructify by the same power, that first gave birth to the seed, so faith, and hope, and love towards God, can only grow, and fructify by the same power, that begat the first seed of them in the soul. Therefore divine, immediate inspiration, and religion, are inseparable in the nature of the thing.

Take away *inspiration*, or suppose it to cease, and no religious acts, or affections can remain. For the creature can return nothing to God, but *That*, which it has first received from him; therefore, if it is to offer up to God, affections and aspirations, that are divine and godly, it must of necessity have the divine nature living, and breathing in it.—Can any thing reflect light, before it has received it, or any other light, than that which it has received? Can any creature breathe forth *earthly* or *diabolical* affections, before it is possessed of an *earthly*, or *diabolical* nature? Yet this is as possible, as for any creature to have divine affections dwelling in it, either *before*, or *any farther*, than as it has, the divine nature, dwelling, and operating in it.

A religious *faith*, that is *uninspired*, a *hope*, or *love*, that proceeds not from the immediate working of the divine nature within us, can no more unite us with God, than an hunger after earthly food, can feed us with the bread of heaven.—All that the *natural*, or *uninspired* man does, or can do in the church has no more of the truth, or power of divine worship in it, than that, which he does in the field, or shop, through a desire of riches.—And the reason is, because all the acts of the natural man, whether relating

lating to matters of religion, or the world, must be equally selfish, and there is no possibility of their being otherwise. For self-love, self-esteem, self-seeking, are as strictly the whole of all that is, or can be, in the natural man, as in the natural beast: the one can no more be better, or act above his nature, than the other. Neither can any creature be in a better, or higher state than this, till something supernatural is found in it: and this supernatural something, called in scripture, the WORD, or SPIRIT, or INSPIRATION of God, is *that alone*, from which man can have the first good thought about God, or the least heavenly desire.

A religion that is not wholly built upon the *supernatural ground*; but stands upon the powers, and reasonings of the natural, *uninspired* man, has not so much as the shadow of true religion in it, but is a mere *nothing*, in the same sense, as an *idol* is said to be *nothing*, because the idol has *nothing* of that in it, which is pretended by it. For the work of religion has no *divine good* in it, but as it brings forth, and keeps up essential union of the spirit of man with the spirit of God; which essential union cannot be made, but through love on both sides, nor by love, but where the love that works on both sides, is of the *same nature*.

No man therefore can love God, or have union with him, but he who is inspired with the *same spirit of love* with which God loved himself from all eternity, and before there was any creature.—Infinite hosts of new created heavenly beings, can begin no *new kind* of love of God, nor have the least power of beginning to love him at all, but by his *own holy spirit of love*. This love that was then in God alone, is the *only love* that can draw creatures to God; they can have no power of cleaving to him, or adoring the divine nature, but by partaking of that *eternal spirit* of love; and therefore the continual, immediate inspiration, or operation of the Holy Spirit, is the only possible ground of our continually loving God.—As to the *pride* charged upon this enthusiasm, so called;

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Christ saith, *without me ye can do nothing*, the same as if he had said, As to yourselves, ye are mere *helpless sin and misery*, and nothing that is good, can come from you, but by the *continual, immediate* breathing and inspiration of another spirit, given by God, to over-rule *your own*. Now is there any pride, in fully believing and acting in full conformity to it? If so, then he that confesses, he neither hath, nor can have a single farthing, but as it is freely given him from charity, thereby declares himself to be a purse-proud vain boaster of his own wealth. Such is the spiritual pride of him, who fully acknowledges, that he neither hath, nor can have the least spark of goodness, but what is freely breathed into him by the spirit of God. Again, if it is *spiritual pride*, to believe, that nothing we think, or say, or do, can have any goodness in it, but that which is wrought immediately by the spirit of God, then it must be said, that in order to have *humility*, we must take some share of our virtues to ourselves, and not allow (as Christ hath said) that *without him, we can do nothing* that is good.

Behold a pride, and an humility, the one as good as the other, and both logically descended from a wisdom, that confesses it cometh not from above.

It is in vain to think, that there is a *middle way*, and that *rational divines* have found it out, as Dr. Warburton has done, who though denying *immediate, continual* inspiration, yet allows, that the spirit's "ordinary influence, occasionally assists the faithful."*

Now this *middle way*, hath neither scripture, nor sense in it: for an *occasional* influence, or concurrence, is as absurd, as an *occasional* God. For an *occasional influence* of the spirit upon us, supposes an *occasional absence* of the spirit from us. For there could be no such thing, unless God was sometimes with us, and sometimes not, sometimes doing us good, as the God of our life, and sometimes doing us no good but leaving us to be good from ourselves.—Occasional influence necessarily implies all this blasphemous absurdity.

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* Serm. Vol. I.

furdity. Again, this *middle way* of an *occasional influence* supposes, that there is something of *man's own* that is good. But if there was any thing good in man, it could not be true, that there is only *one that is good, and that is God*. And was there any goodness in creatures, either in heaven, or on earth, but the *one goodness* of the divine nature, living, working, and manifesting itself in them, as its created instruments, then good creatures, both in heaven and on earth, would have something else to adore, besides, or along with God. For goodness, be it where it will, is adorable for itself; if therefore any degree of it belonged to the creature, it ought to have a share of that same adoration, that is paid to the Creator.

All religion's of *divine inspiration*, which being interpreted, is *Immanuel*, or *God with us*. Every thing short of this, is short of that religion, which worships God in spirit and in truth. And every religious trust or confidence in any thing else, is but a sort of image-worship, which though it may deny the form, yet retains the power thereof in the heart. And he that places any religious safety, in theological decisions, scholastic points, in particular doctrines and opinions, about *faith, justification, sanctification, or election*, so far departs from the true worship of the living God, and sets up an *idol* of notions, to be worshipped, if not instead of, yet along with him. And I believe it may be taken for a certain truth, that every society of Christians, whose religion stands upon this ground, however ardent and laborious, their zeal may be in such matters, yet in spite of all, sooner or later, it will be found, that nature is at the bottom, and that a selfish, earthly pride in their own definitions, and doctrines, will by degrees creep up to the same height, and do those very same things, which they exclaim against in Popes, Cardinals, and Jesuits. Nor can it be otherwise; for a letter-learned zeal has but one nature, wherever it is; it can only do that for Christians, which it did for Jews; as it antiently brought forth Scribes, Pharisees, *Hypocrites, and Crucifiers of Christ,

Christ, as it afterwards brought forth Popes, papal decrees, images, anathema's, transubstantiation; so in Protestant countries, it will be doing the same thing, only with *other materials*; Images of wood and clay, will only be given up for *images of doctrines*; grace and works, imputed sin, and imputed righteousness, election and reprobation, will have their synods of *Dort*, as truly evangelical, as any council of *Trent*.

This must be the case of all fallen Christendom, as well Popish as Protestant, till single men, and churches, know, confess, and firmly adhere to this truth, *viz. that our salvation is in the life of Jesus Christ in us*. Every thing besides this, or that is not leading to it, is but mere Babel in all sects, and divisions of Christians, living to themselves, under a seeming holiness of Christian strife, and contention about scripture words.—But this truth of truths, fully possessed, brings God and man together, puts an end to every *Lo here*, and *Lo there*, and turns the whole faith of man, to a Christ, that can no where be a Saviour to him, but in his inmost soul, nor there, by any other means, but the *immediate inspiration of the holy spirit*.—To this man, all scripture gives daily edification; the words of Christ and his apostles fall like a fire into him. And what is it, that they kindle there? Not notions, not itching ears, not rambling desires after new and new expounders of them, but a holy flame of love, to be always attending to Christ, and his holy spirit within him, who alone can make him to be, and do all that which the words of Christ, and his apostles have taught. For there is no possibility of being *like-minded* with Christ, but by the nature and spirit of Christ, living in us. Read all our Saviour's sermon on the mount, consent to every part of it, yet the time of practising it, will never come, till you have a new nature from Christ, and are as vitally in him, and he in you, as the vine in the branch, and the branch in the vine. For no blessedness can be found either in men or angels, but where the spirit, and life of God are with-

in them. And all men, or churches, not placing all in the life, light, and guidance of the holy spirit, but pretending to act for the glory of God, from opinions which their logic and learning have collected from scripture words, or from what a Calvin, an Arminius, or some smaller name, has told them, are but where the apostles were, when *there was a strife amongst them, who should be the greatest*. And how much soever they may say, of their zeal for truth, and the glory of God, yet their behaviour towards one another, is proof enough, that the great strife among them is, which shall have the greatest number of followers. Whereas not numbers of men, or kingdoms professing Christianity, but numbers, redeemed from the death of Adam, to the life of Christ, are the glory of the Christian church. And in whatever national Christianity, any thing else is sought after, by the profession of the gospel, but a *new heavenly* life, through the eternal Son of God, wrought in the fallen soul; there, the spirit of *satanic* and *worldly* subtlety, will be church, and priest, and supreme power, in all that is called religion.

But to return to the doctrine of continual inspiration. The *natural* man, educated in *pagan* learning, and *scholastic* theology, seeing the strength of his genius in the search after knowledge, how easily and learnedly he can talk, and write, criticise, and determine upon all scripture words and facts, looks at all this, as a full proof of his own religious wisdom, and calls immediate inspiration, enthusiasm; not considering, that *all the woes* denounced by Christ against Scribes, Pharisees, and Hypocrites, are so many woes, denounced against every appearance and shew of religion, that the natural man can practise.

And what is well to be noted, every one, however high in human literature, is but this very natural man, and can only have the goodness of a carnal religion, till as empty of all, as a new born child, the spirit of God becomes the *inspirer* and *doer* of all that

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that he wills, does, and aims at, in his whole course of religion.

But to all this, it must be added, that a *religion* of worldly glory and prosperity carried on, under the gospel state, has more of a diabolical nature, than that of the Jewish Pharisees.—It is the *highest*, and *last* working of the mystery of iniquity, because it lives to Satan and the world, in and by a daily profession of being crucified with Christ, of being led by his spirit, of being risen from the world, and set with him in heavenly places.

I would ask all *writers* against *continual*, *immediate* divine inspiration, how they could more effectually lead men, into an *habitual* state of *sinning* against the Holy Ghost, than by such doctrine? For how can we possibly avoid the sin of grieving, or quenching, the spirit, but by continually reverencing his holy presence in us; by continually waiting for, trusting, and attending to that, which the spirit of God, *wills*, *works*, and *manifests* within us? To turn men from this continual dependence upon the holy spirit, is turning them from all true knowledge of God. For without this, there is no possibility of any edifying, saving knowledge of God. For though we have ever so many mathematical demonstrations of his *being*, we are without all real knowledge of him, till his own spirit manifests him, as a power of life, light, and goodness, vitally felt, and adored in our souls. This is the one knowledge of God, which is *eternal life*; this is that knowledge of which Christ saith, No one *knoweth the Father but the Son*, and *he to whomsoever the Son revealeth him*. And if none belong to God, but those who are *led by the spirit of God*, if we are reprobates unless the spirit of Christ be living in us, who need be told, that all we have to trust to, as children of God, is the *continual immediate guidance, unctiōn, and teaching of his holy spirit*? Or how can we more *profanely* sin against this spirit, or more expressly call men from the power of God unto Satan, than by ridiculing a faith and hope, that look *wholly* to his continual, *immediate*

diate operations, for all that can be holy and good in us?

This is the end of all scripture; for all that is there said, however learnedly read, or studied by *Hebrew*, or *Greek* skill, fails of its end, till it brings us to feel all that the scriptures speak of God and man, verified in our own souls. For all is within man, that can be either good or evil to him: God *within him*, is his divine life; Satan *within him* is his life of *earthly wisdom*, of diabolical falseness, wrath, pride, and vanity of every kind. There is no middle-way, he that is not under the power of the one, is under the power of the other; so far therefore as man loses this life of God, so far he falls under the power of Satan and *worldly wisdom*. When St. Peter, full of an *human* love to Christ, advised him to avoid his sufferings, Christ rejected him, with *Get thee behind me Satan*; and only gave this reason for it, *thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men*. A plain proof that whatever is not from the holy spirit of God, however plausible it may seem to men, is yet in itself, nothing else but the power of Satan in us. Christians, seeking any thing else, but to be inspired by the *spirit* of God, will bring forth a *Christendom*, that in the sight of God, will have no other name, than a spiritual *Babylon*, a spiritual *Egypt*; a scarlet *whore*, a devouring *beast*, and red *dragon*. For all these names belong to all men, however learned, and to all churches, whether greater or less, in which the spirit of this world hath any share of power. This was the fall of the *whole church*, soon after the apostolic ages; and all *human* reformati^ons, begun by ecclesiastical *learning*, and supported by civil power, will signify little or nothing, till all churches dying to their own will, wisdom, and own advancement, seek for no reforming power, but from that spirit of God, which converted Sinners, Publicans, Harlots, Jews and Heathens, into an holy, apostolical church, a church, which knew they were of God, that they belonged to God, by that spirit which he had given them, and which worked in them.

Time

Time and the things of time, will soon have an end; and he that in time trusts to any thing, but the Spirit of God working in his heart, will be but ill fitted to enter into eternity; God must be all in all in us here, or we cannot be his hereafter.—Time works only for eternity; and poverty eternal must as certainly follow him, who dies only stuffed with human learning, as he who dies only full of worldly riches.—The folly of thinking to have any divine learning, but that which the holy Spirit teaches, or to make ourselves rich in knowledge towards God, by heaps of common-place learning, will leave us, as dreadfully cheated, as that rich builder of barns in the gospel, to whom it was said, *Thou fool, this night, shall thy soul be required of thee; and then, whose shall all these things be?* Luke xii. So is every man that treasures up a religious learning, that comes not wholly from the spirit of God.

Farther, what a blindness is it, to charge persons with the *enthusiasm* of holding the necessity of continual, immediate inspiration, and to attack them as enemies to the established church, when every body's eyes see, that collect after collect in the established liturgy, teaches, and requires them to believe, and pray for the continual inspiration of the Spirit, as that alone, by which they can have the least good thought or desire? Thus, "O God, forasmuch as without thee, we are not able to please thee: mercifully grant that thy holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts." Is it possible for words more strongly to express the necessity of a continual, divine inspiration? Or can inspiration be higher, or more immediate in prophets and apostles, than that which directs, that which rules our hearts, not now and then, but in all things? Or can the absolute necessity of this, be more fully declared, than by saying, that if it is not in this degree both of height and continuance in our hearts, nothing that is done by us, can be pleasing to God?

Now the matter is not at all about the *different effects*, proceeding from inspiration, as whether by it,
a man

a man be made a *saint* in himself, or sent by God with a *prophetic* message to others, this affects not the *nature* and *necessity* of inspiration, which is just as necessary to all *true goodness*, as to all *true prophecy*.—All scripture is of divine inspiration. But why so? *Because holy men of old, spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* Now the above collect, as well as Christ and his apostles, oblige us in like manner to hold, that all *holiness* is *by divine inspiration*, and that therefore there could have been no *holy men* of old, or in any latter times, but solely for this reason, because they LIVED, *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* Again, the liturgy prays thus, “O God, from whom all good things do come, grant that by thy holy inspiration, we may think those things that be good, and by thy merciful guiding may perform the same.”—Now, if I have ever said any thing *higher* of the nature, and necessity of *continual, divine inspiration*, than this church-prayer does, I refuse no censure. But if I have, from all that we know of *God*, shewn the utter impossibility of any goodness in us, but from the *divine nature*, in us, if I have shewn, that Christ and his apostles, over and over say the same thing; and that our *church liturgy* is daily praying according to it; what kinder thing can I say of those churchmen, who accuse me of *enthusiasm*, than that which Christ said of his blind crucifiers, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!*

It is to no purpose to object to all this, that these kingdoms are over-run with enthusiasts who are acting in the wildest manner, under the pretence of being led by the spirit. Be it so, or not so, the doctrine I am upon is not in the least affected by it. For what an argument would this be; *Enthusiasts* make a bad use of the doctrine of being *led by the Spirit of God*, Ergo, *He is enthusiastical* who preaches up the doctrine of being led by the Spirit of God. Now as absurd as this is, was any of my accusers, as high in *genius*, as bulky in learning, as *Colossus* was in stature, he would be at a loss to bring a stronger argument than this, to prove me an Enthusiast, or an abettor of them.

Except

Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God.—Now as sure as this his necessary, so sure is it, that no one can be thus converted, till *natural reason*, and his own will, are equally denied.

Now whether this reason, broken off from God, contendeth about the difference of scripture words and opinions, or reasoneth against them, the same evil state of fallen nature, the same separation from God, the same evil tempers of flesh and blood, will be equally strengthened by the one, as by the other.—Hence it is, that Papists and Protestants are hating, fighting and killing one another for the sake of their *different, excellent* opinions, and yet, as to the *lusts of the flesh*, the *lust of the eye*, and the *pride of life*, they are in the highest union, and communion with one other. For if you expect a *zealous protestant* to be therefore alive to God, or a *zealous papist* to be therefore dead to all goodness, you may be said to have lived in the world without either eyes or ears.—And the reason why it must be so, is because *bad syllogisms* for transubstantiation, and *better syllogisms* against it, signify no more towards the casting *Satan out of our souls*, than a bad, or better taste for painting.

Hence also it is, that Christendom, full of the nicest decisions about faith, grace, works, merits, satisfaction, &c. is full of all those evil tempers, which prevailed in the heathen world, when none of these things were thought of.

A *Scholar*, pitying the blindness and folly of those who live to themselves in the cares and pleasures of this vain life, thinks himself to have escaped the pollutions of the world, because he is, day after day, dividing, dissecting, and mending church-opinions, fixing heresies here, schisms there; forgetting all the while, that *carnal self-will* and *natural reason* have the doing of all that is done by this learned zeal, and are as busy, and active in him, as in the *reasoning infidel*, or *projecting worldling*. For where this is wholly denied, there nothing can be called heresy, or wickedness, but the want of loving God with

with our whole heart, and our neighbour as ourselves: nor any thing be called life or salvation, but the spirit and power of Christ manifesting itself in us. But where the *natural man* is become great in religious learning, there the greater the scholar, the more firmly will he be fixed in their religion, whose *God is their belly*.

Hence may be seen, the great and like blindness both of Infidels and Christians; the one in trusting to their own reason, dwelling in its own logical conclusions; the other in trusting to their own reason, dwelling in learned opinions about scripture words and phrases, and doctrines built upon them. "For as soon as it is known, that *God is all in all*, that in him we live and move and have our being; that we can have nothing *separately*, or out of him, but every thing in him; that we have no being, or degree of being but in him; that he can give us nothing as our good, but himself, nor any degree of salvation from our fallen nature, but in such degree, as he again communicates something more of himself to us: as soon as this is known, then it is known with the utmost evidence, that to put a religious trust in our own reason, whether confined to itself, or working in doctrines about scripture words, has the nature of that same idolatry, that puts a religious trust in the *sun*, a departed *saint*, or a graven *image*." And as *image-worship* has often boasted of its divine power, because of the wonders of zeal and devotion, that have been raised thereby in thousands, and ten thousands of its followers; so it is no marvel, if *opinion-worship* should often have, and boast of the same effects.

What poor divinity knowledge comes from great scholars, and great readers, may be sufficiently seen from the two following quotations in a late dissertation on *enthusiasm*; the one is taken from Dr. Warburton's sermons, the other from a *pastoral letter* of Mr. Stinfra; a preacher amongst the *Mennonists of Friesland*. That from Dr. Warburton, stands thus: "By them (that is, by the writings of the New Testament) the prophetic promise of our Saviour, that the *comforter* should

should abide for ever; was eminently fulfilled. For tho' his ordinary influence occasionally assists the faithful, yet his *constant abode and supreme illumination* is in the sacred scriptures.*" Dr. Warburton's doctrine is this, that the inspired books of the new Testament, is that *comforter*, or *spirit of truth*, which is meant by Christ's being *always* with his church.—Let us put the Doctor's doctrine into the letter of the text, which will best shew how true, or false it is.

Our Lord saith, *it is expedient for you that I go away, or the comforter will not come*: that is, it is expedient for you, that I leave off teaching you in words, that sound only into your outward ears, that you may have the same words in writing, for your outward eyes to look upon; for if I do not depart from this vocal way of teaching you, the comforter will not come, that is, ye will not have the comfort of my words written on paper. But if I go away, I will send written books, which shall lead you into such a truth of words, as ye could not have, whilst they were only spoken from my mouth; but being written on paper, they will be my *spiritual, heavenly, constant abode* with you.

Christ saith further; *I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now: howbeit when he, the spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you*: that is, though ye cannot be sufficiently instructed from my words at present, yet when they shall hereafter come to you in written books, they will give you a knowledge of all truth, for they shall not speak of themselves, but shall receive words from me, and shew them unto you.

Christ also saith, *if any man love me, my father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him*: That is, according to the Doctor's theology, certain books of scripture will come to him, and make their abode with him; for he expressly confineth the *constant abode, and supreme illumination* of God, to the holy scriptures. Therefore (horrible to say) God's inward presence, his operating power of life

* Dissertation, p. 10.

life and light in our souls, his dwelling in us, and we in him, is something of a lower nature, that only may occasionally happen, and has less of God in it, than the dead letter of scripture, which alone is his constant abode and supreme illumination—Miserable fruits of a paradoxical genius!

Rabbi, saith Nicodemus to Christ, *we know that thou art a teacher come from God*: Now this must be said of the scripture likewise; it is a *teacher come from God*, and therefore fully to be believed, highly revered, and strictly followed. But as Christ's teaching in the flesh was only preparatory to his vital teaching by the spirit; so the teaching of scripture by words written with ink and paper, is only preparatory to the teaching of God, by his spirit within us. Every other opinion of the holy scripture, but that of an *outward teacher* and guide to God's *inward teaching*, is but making an idol-god of it: I say an idol-god; for to those who rest in it as the *constant abode and supreme illumination of God with them*, it can be nothing else. For, if nothing of *divine faith, love, or goodness*, can have place in us, but by *divine inspiration*; they who think these virtues may be sufficiently raised in us by the letter of scripture, do in truth make the letter of scripture their *inspiring God*.

The apostles preached, and wrote to the people by *divine inspiration*. But what do they say of their *inspired doctrine*, and teachings? What virtue was there in them? Do they say that their words, and teachings, was the very *promised Comforter*, the *spirit of truth*, the *true abode*, and *supreme illumination of God* in the souls of men? So far from such a blasphemous thought, that they affirm the direct contrary, and compare all their *inspired teachings* to the *dead works* of bare *planting and watering*, and which must continue dead, till *life* come into them from much higher power. *I have planted*, saith St. Paul, *Apollos hath watered*, but *God gave the increase*. And then further to shew, that this planting and watering, which was the *highest work* that an *inspired Apostle* could do, was yet, in itself, to be considered, as a *lifeless, powerless*

powerless thing, he adds, *So then, neither is he that planteth any thing; nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*

But if this must be said of all that, which the inspired apostles taught in outward words, that it was nothing in itself, was without power, without life, and only such a preparation towards life, as is that of planting and watering; must not the same be said of their inspired teachings, when left behind them in writing? For what else are the apostolical scriptures, but those very instructions put into writing, which they affirmed to be bare planting and watering, quite powerless in themselves, till the living spirit of God worked with them? Or will any one say, that what *Paul*, *Peter*, and *John*, spoke by inspiration from their own mouths, was indeed but bare planting and watering, in order to be capable of receiving life from God: but when these apostolical instructions, were written on paper, they were raised out of their first inability, got the nature of God himself, became spirit and life, and might be called the great quickening power of God, or, as the doctor says, the constant abode, and supreme illumination of his spirit with us?

I exceedingly love and highly reverence the sacred writings of the apostles and evangelists, and would gladly persuade every one to pay as profound a regard to them, as they would to an *Elijah*, a *John Baptist*, or a *Paul*, whom they knew to be immediately sent from heaven, with God's message to them. —I reverence them, as fitted to do all that good amongst Christians now, which the apostles did in their day, and as of the same benefit to the church of every age, as their planting and watering was to the first.

But if this is not thought that fullness of regard, that is due to the holy messengers of God; if any one will still be so learnedly wise, as to affirm, that though *Paul's* preaching in his epistles, whilst he was alive, was indeed only bare planting and watering, but the same epistles being published after his death, got another nature, became full of divine and living power; such a one hath no right to laugh (as the

Doctor doth) at the silly *Mahometan*, who believes the Alcoran to be *uncreated*. For wherever there is *divine efficacy*, there must be an *uncreated* power. And if, as the Doctor saith, the scriptures of the New Testament are the *only constant abode*, and *supreme illumination* of the spirit of God with us, all that is said of the *eternal* spirit of God, of the *uncreated light*, ought to be said of them; that they are the WORD that was God, was with God, and are our true Immanuel, or God with us.

I shall now only add this friendly hint to the Doctor, that he has a remedy at hand in his own *sermon*, how he may be delivered from thus grossly mistaking the spirit of the gospel, as well as the law of *Moses*.—
 “ St. Paul (saith the Doctor) had a quick and lively
 “ imagination, and an extensive and intimate ac-
 “ quaintance with those masters in moral painting,
 “ the classic writers; (N. B.) all which he proudly
 “ sacrificed to the glory of the everlasting gospel *.”

Now if the Doctor did that (though it was only from *humility*) which he says the apostle did *proudly*, such humility might be as great a good to him, as that pride was to the apostle. And if the everlasting gospel is now as glorious a thing as it was in St. Paul's days; if the highest classic knowledge is fit for nothing but to be *all sacrificed to the glory of the gospel*; how wonderful is it, that this should never come into his head, from the beginning to the end of his three long Legation-Volumes, or that he should come piping hot with fresh and fresh classic beauties found out by himself in a *Shakespear*, a *Pope*, &c. to preach from the pulpit, the divine wisdom of a *Paul*, in renouncing all his great classical attainments, as mere loss and dung, that by so doing, he might *win Christ*, and be *found in him*!

Let the Doctor figure to himself the gaudy pageantry of a high mass in a *Romish* cathedral; let him wonder at that flagrant, daring contrariety, that it hath to the first gospel-church of Christ. Would he not still be fuller of wonder, if he should hear the Pope declaring, that all this heathenish shew of invented fopperies,

* Serm. vol. I. p. 229.

fopperies, was his *projected defence* of that first church of Christ?—But if the doctor would see a protestant wonder, full as great, he need only look at his own theatrical parading show of heathen mysteries, and heathenish learning, set forth in highest pomp. To what end? Why to bring forth, what he calls, (as the Pope above) his *projected defence of Christianity*.

I come now to the quotation from the pastoral letter of Mr. *Stinstra*. “A judicious writer, (says the dissertation) observes, that *sound understanding*, and reason, are *that on which*, and by which, God *principally* operates, (N. B.) when he finds it proper to assist (N. B.) our *weakness* by his Spirit.”*

I cannot more illustrate the sense, or extol the judgment, both of the *author*, and *quoter* of this striking passage, than by the following words.

“A judicious naturalist observes, that *sound and strong lungs*, are *that, on which*, and by which, the air or spirit of this world *principally* operates, when (N. B.) he finds it proper to assist, (N. B.) the *weakness* of our lungs, by his breathing into them.”—Now if any man should find his heart edified, his understanding enlightened, by the above passage on *divine inspiration*, he will be pleased at my assuring him, that the pastoral letter of Mr. *Stinstra*, and the dissertation on enthusiasm by Mr. *Green*, are from the beginning to the end, full as good in every respect, as that is.

These two instances are proof enough, that as soon as any man trusts to natural abilities, skill in languages, and common-place learning, as the true means of entering into the kingdom of God, a kingdom, which is nothing but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; he gives himself up to *certain delusion*, and can escape no *error* that is popular, or that suits his state and situation in the learned, religious world.—He has sold his birth-right in the gospel state of *divine illumination*, to make a figure and noise, with the sounding brass and tinkling cymbals of the natural man.

Thus Mr. *Green*, wanting to write on *divine inspiration*, runs from book to book, from country to coun-

try, to *pick up reports* wherever he could find them, concerning divine inspiration, from this, and that *judicious* author, that so he might be sure of compiling a *judicious* dissertation on the subject. All which he might have known to be mere delusion, had he but remembered, or regarded any one single saying either of Christ, or his apostles concerning the *holy Spirit*, and *his operations*. For not a word is said by them, but fully shews, that all knowledge of the Spirit, is only that which the Spirit manifests in man.

But there is a degree of delusion still higher, to be noted, in such writers, as Mr. *Green*; for his collection of ingenious, eminent, rational authors, of whom he asks counsel concerning the necessity, or certainty of the immediate inspiration of the spirit, are such as deny it, and write against it. Therefore the proceeding is just as wise, as if a man was to consult some ingenious, and eminent *Atheists*, about the truth and certainty of God's immediate, continual providence; or ask a few select *Deists*, how, or what he was to believe of the nature, and power of Gospel faith. Now there are the Holy Spirit's own operations, and there are reports about them. The only true reports, are those that are made by inspired persons; and if there were no such persons, there could be no true reports of the matter. And therefore to consult uninspired persons, and such as deny, and reproach the pretence to inspiration, to be rightly instructed about the truth of immediate, continual divine inspiration, is a degree of blindness, greater than can be charged upon the old Jewish Scribes, and Pharisees.

The reports, that are to be acknowledged as true, concerning the holy spirit, and his operations, are those that are recorded in scripture; that is, the scriptures are an infallible history, or relation of that which the Holy Spirit is, and does, and works in true believers; and also an infallible direction how we are to seek, and wait, and trust in his good power over us. But then the scriptures themselves, though thus true, and infallible in these reports, about the Holy Spirit, yet can go no farther, than to

be a true history; they cannot give the reader the possession and enjoyment of that which they relate. This is plain, not only from the nature of a written history, but from the express words of our Lord, *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* Therefore the new birth, is that alone, which gives true knowledge and perception of that which is the kingdom of God. The history may relate truths about it; but the kingdom of God, being nothing else, but the power, and presence of God, dwelling and ruling in our souls, this can only manifest itself in man, by the new birth.

Poor, miserable man! that strives with all the sophistry of human wit, to be delivered from the immediate, continual operation and government of the spirit of God, not considering, that where God is not, there is the devil, and where the spirit rules not, there all is the work of the flesh, though nothing be talked of, but spiritual and Christian matters. I say talked of; for the best ability of the natural man, can go no farther, than talk, and notions, and opinions about scripture words and facts; in these, he may be a great critic, an acute logician, a powerful orator, and know every thing of scripture, except the spirit and the truth.

How much then is it to be lamented, that though all scripture assures us, the things of the spirit of God, must, to the end of the world, be foolishness to the natural man; yet from one end of learned Christendom to the other, nothing is thought of, as the proper means of attaining divine knowledge, but that which every natural, proud, envious, false, vain-glorious, worldly man can do. Where is that divinity-student, who thinks, or was ever taught to think, of partaking of the light of the gospel any other way, than by doing with the scriptures, that which he does with Pagan writers, whether poets, orators, or comedians, viz. exercising his logic, rhetoric, and critical skill, in descanting upon them? This done, he is thought by himself, and others, to have a sufficiency of divine, apostolical knowledge. What wonder therefore if it should sometimes happen,

that the very same vain, corrupt, puffing literature, that raises one man to be a poet-laureat, should set another in a divinity chair?

How is it, that the logical, critical, learned deist comes by his infidelity? Why by the same help of the same good powers of the *natural man*, as many a learned Christian comes to know, and contend for the gospel. For, drop divine inspiration, and all is dropt, that can give the believer any godly difference from the infidel. The Christian therefore that rejects and writes against the necessity of immediate divine inspiration, pleads the whole cause of infidelity: he confirms the ground, on which it stands; and has nothing to prove the goodness of his own Christianity, but that which equally proves to the Deist, the goodness of his infidelity. For without the new birth, or which is the same thing, without immediate, continual divine inspiration, the difference between the Christian, and the Infidel, is lost; and whether the uninspired, ungenerate Son of Adam, be in the church, or out of the church, he is still that child of this world, *that mere natural man*, to whom the *things of the spirit of God*, are and must be foolishness.—Nothing but the loss of the light and Spirit of God, turned an order of angels into devils, —Nothing but the loss of that same light and spirit, took from Adam, his first crown of glory, stript him more naked than the beasts, and left him a prey to devils, and in the jaws of eternal death.—What therefore can have the least power towards man's redemption, but the light and Spirit of God? Or what can begin, or bring forth the return of his first state, but this eternal light and spirit.—Hence it is, that the gospel state is by our Lord, affirmed to be a *kingdom of heaven*, because it has the nature of no worldly thing, is to serve no worldly ends, can be helped by no worldly power, receives nothing from man, but man's full denial of himself, stands upon nothing that is finite or transitory, has no existence but in that power of God, that created and upholds heaven and earth; and is a kingdom of God become man, and a kingdom of men united to God, through
a continual,

a continual, immediate divine illumination. What scripture of the New Testament can you read, that does not prove this to be the gospel state, a kingdom of God, into which none can enter, but by being born of the Spirit, none can continue but by being led by the Spirit, and in which not a thought, or desire, or action, can be allowed to have any part, but as it is a fruit of the Spirit?

What now have parts, and literature, and the natural abilities of man, that they can do here? Just as much as they can do at the resurrection of the dead; for all that is to be done here, is nothing else, but *resurrection and life*. Therefore, that which gave eyes to the blind, cleansed the lepers, cast out devils, and raised the dead; that alone can, and must do all that is to be done in this gospel kingdom of God. For the smallest work of grace must be as solely done by God, as the *greatest miracle* in nature: because every work of grace, is the same overcoming of nature; as when the dead are raised to life.—Yet vain man would be thought to have great power in this kingdom of grace, not because he happens to be born of noble parents, but because he has happened to be made a scholar, has run through all languages and histories, has been long exercised in conjectures and criticisms, and has his head as full of all notions, theological, poetical, and philosophical, as a dictionary is full of words.

Now let this simple question, decide the matter: Has this great scholar any more power of *saying to this mountain, be thou removed hence, and cast into the sea*, than the illiterate Christian? If not, he is just as weak, as powerless, and little in the kingdom of God, as he is. But if the illiterate man's faith, should happen to be nearer to the *bulk* of a grain of mustard-seed, than that of the *prodigious scholar*, the illiterate Christian stands much above him in the kingdom of God.

Look now at the present state of Christendom, glorying in the light of Greek and Roman learning, (lately broke forth) as a *light* that has helped the gospel to shine with a lustre, that it scarce ever had before.

fore. Look at this, and you will see the *fall* of the present church from its first gospel state, to have much likeness to the *fall* of the first *divine* man, from the glory of innocence, and heavenly purity, into an earthly state and worldly craft, and serpentine subtilty.

In the first gospel church, heathen light had no other name, than heathen darkness; and the wisdom of words was no more sought after, than that *friendship* of the world, which is *enmity* with God. In that new born church, the *tree of life*, which grew in the *midst of paradise*, took root and grew up again.— In the present church, the *tree of life* is hissed at, as the visionary food of deluded enthusiasts; and the tree of *death*, called the tree of knowledge of good and evil, has the eyes and hearts of priest and people, and is thought to do as much good to Christians, as it did evil to the first inhabitants of paradise.— This tree, that brought death and corruption into human nature, is now called a tree of *light*, and is, day and night, well watered with every corrupt stream, however distant, or muddy with earth, that can be drawn to it.

But now, what follows from this new risen light? Why *Aristotle's* atheism, *Cicero's* height of pride and depth of dissimulation, and every refined or gross species of *Greek* and *Roman* vices, are as glaring in this new enlightened Christian church, as ever they were in old Pagan *Greece*, or *Rome*.—Would you find a *gospel-christian*, in all this *mid-day* glory of learning, you may light a candle, as the philosopher did in the mid-day sun, to find an honest man.

How poorly was the gospel at first preached, if the wisdom of words, and if wit and imagination had been its genuine helps? But alas they stand in the same contrariety to one another, as self-denial and self-gratification. To know the truth of gospel-salvation, is to know that man's natural *wisdom* is to be equally sacrificed with his natural *folly*: for they are but one and the same thing, only called sometimes by one name, and sometimes by the other.

His intellectual faculties are, by the *fall*, in a much worse

worse state than his natural animal appetites, and want a much greater self-denial. And when our own *will*, our own *understanding*, and *imagination* have their natural strength indulged, and are made rich and honourable with the treasures acquired from a study of the *Belles Lettres*, they will just as much help poor fallen men to be *like-minded* with Christ, as the *art of cookery*, well and daily studied, will help a professor of the gospel, to the spirit and practice of Christian abstinence.

Who then can enough wonder at that bulk of libraries, which has taken place of the short gospel? Or at that number of champion disputants, who from age to age, have been all in arms, to support a set of opinions and practices, all which may be most cordially embraced, without the least degree of self-denial, and most firmly held without *the least degree* of humility.

What a grossness of ignorance, both of man and his Saviour, to run to Greek and Roman schools, to learn how to put off *Adam*, and to put on Christ? To drink at the fountains of Pagan poets, and orators, in order more divinely to drink of the cup, that Christ drank of?—What can come of all this, but that which is already too much come, a *Ciceronian-gospeller*, instead of a *gospel-penitent*?

This will be more or less the case with all the doctrines of Christ, whilst under classical acquisition, and administration. Those divine truths, which are no farther good and redeeming, but as they are spirit and life in us, will serve only to help *classic painters* (as Dr. W. * calls them) to lavish out their colours on their own paper monuments of lifeless virtues.

The enemies to man's rising out of the fall of *Adam*, through the spirit and power of Christ, are many. But the great enemy is SELF-EXALTATION;

* As this address was wrote sometime ago, in which are certain strictures upon Dr. Warburton's writings, who has lately been consecrated a Right Reverend Lord Bishop; I thought it more candid not to alter my stile, than to take the advantage of charging such gross errors, on a bishop of Gloucester, which I only found in Mr. and Dr. Warburton.

TION; when self-exaltation ceases, the last enemy is destroyed, and all that came from the death of Adam, is swallowed up in victory.

What therefore has every one so much to fear, and abhor, as self-exaltation, and every outward work, that proceeds from it.—But at what things shall a man look, to see *that* which raises pride to its strongest life, and most of all hinders the life of the humble Jesus in his soul? Shall he call the *pomps and vanities* of the world, the highest works of *self-adoration*? Shall he look at *fops and beaux*, and *painted ladies*, to see the pride that has the most of antichrist in it? No, by no means. These are indeed marks shameful enough, of the vain, foolish heart of man: but yet, comparatively speaking, they are but the skin-deep follies of that pride, which the fall of man, hath brought forth in him.—Would you see the deepest root, and iron-stem of pride, you must enter into the dark chamber of man's soul, where the light of God (which alone gives humility) being extinguished by the death, which Adam died, *self-exaltation*, became the strong man that kept possession of the house, till a stronger than he should come.—In this secret source a swelling kingdom of pomps and vanities is set up in the heart of man, to which all outward pomps and vanities, are but childish, transitory play-things. The inward *strong man* of pride, has his higher works *within*; and has every power of the soul, offering continual incense to him.—His *memory*, his *will*, his *understanding*, and *imagination* are always at work for him.—His *memory* is the faithful repository of all the fine things he hath done. His *will*, though it has all the world before it, yet goes after nothing, but as this sends it. His understanding is ever upon the stretch for new projects to enlarge the dominions of it; and if this fails, *imagination* comes in, to make him a king, and mighty lord of *castles in the air*.

Now what is it in the human soul, that most of all hinders the death of this old man? What is it, that above all other things makes it the governor of all the powers of the heart and soul? It is the

fancied

fancied riches of *parts*, the glitter of *genius*, the flights of *imagination*, the glory of *learning*, and the self-conceited strength of *natural reason*: These are the strong holds of fallen nature, the master-builders of pride's temple in the heart of man.—And here let it be well observed, that all these magnified talents of the natural man are started up through his miserable fall from the life of God in his soul.—*Wit*, *genius*, *learning*, and *natural reason*, would have had no more a name amongst men, than *blindness*, *ignorance*, and *sickness*, had man continued, as at first, an holy image of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.—Every thing then, that dwelt in him, or came from him, would have only said *so much* of God, and *nothing* of himself, have manifested nothing to him, but the *heavenly powers* of the triune life of God dwelling in him. He would have no more consciousness of his own wit, or natural reason, or goodness, than of his *own creating power*, at beholding the created heavens, and earth.—It is his dreadful fall from God, that has furnished him with these high intellectual riches, just as it has furnished him with the substantial riches of his *bestial appetites*, and *lusts*. And when the lusts of the flesh have spent their life, when flesh and blood shall be forced to let the soul go loose; all these bright talents will end with that system of fleshly lusts in which they began; and that of man, which remains, will have nothing of its own, nothing that can say, *I do this*, or *I do that*, but all that it hath, or doth, will be either the *glory of God* manifested in it, or the *power of hell* in full possession of it.—The time of man's playing with *parts*, *wit*, and *abilities*, and of fancying himself something in the intellectual world, may be much shorter, but can be no longer, than he can eat, and drink with the animals of this world.—When the time cometh, that fine buildings, rich settlements, acquired honours, and rabbi, rabbi, must take their leave of him, all the stately structures, which genius, learning, and imagination, have painted inwardly on his brain and outwardly on paper,

paper, must bear full witness to *Solomon's* vanity of vanities.

The intellectual power, which has the best help in it, towards bringing man again into the region of divine light, is that poor, despised thing, called *simplicity*. This is that, which stops the workings of the fallen nature, and leaves room for God to work again in the soul, according to the good pleasure of his will. It stands in such a waiting posture before God, as the plants of the earth wait for the inflowing riches of the light and air. But the *self-assuming* workings of man's natural powers, shut him up in himself, closely barred up against the inflowing riches of the light and spirit of God.

Yet so it is, in this fallen state of the gospel church, that with these proud endowments of fallen nature, the *classic* scholar, full fraught with pagan light and skill, comes forth to play the *critic and orator* with the simplicity of salvation mysteries; mysteries which mean nothing else but the *inward work* of the triune God in the soul of man.

However, to make way for *parts, criticism, and language-learning*, to have the full management of salvation doctrines, the well-read scholar gives out, that the antient way of knowing the things of God, taught, and practised by *fishermen-apostles*, is obsolete. They indeed wanted to have divine knowledge from the immediate, continual operation of the holy spirit; but this state was only for a time, till genius, and learning entered into the pale of the church.—Behold, if ever, *the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place!*—For as soon as this doctrine is set up, that man's natural parts, and acquired learning, have full right and power to guide men into that truth, which was once the office of the holy spirit; it may with the greatest truth be said, that *the kingdom of God* is shut up; and only a kingdom of Scribes, Pharisees, and Hypocrites come instead of it. For by this doctrine the whole power of gospel religion, is more denied, than by setting up *the infallibility of the Pope*; for though his claim to

infallibility

infallibility is false, yet he claims it under the holy spirit; but the Protestant scholar has his divinity knowledge from himself, his own logic, and learned reason.—Christ has no where given the least power to *logic, learning, or the natural powers of man*, in his kingdom: He has never said to them, *Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven*; never said to them, *Go ye and teach all nations*, no more than he hath said to wolves, *Go and feed my sheep*.

But the *letter of scripture* hath been so long the usurped province of school-critics, and learned reasoners making their markets of it, that the difference between notional, and living, divine knowledge, is almost lost in the Christian world. So that if any awakened souls are here or there found among Christians, who think more must be known of God, of Christ, and the powers of the world to come, than every scholar can know, by reading the *letter of scripture*, immediately the cry of *enthusiasm*, whether it be priest, or people, is sent after them, —A procedure, which could only have some excuse, if these *critics* could first prove, that the apostle's text, ought to be thus read, *The spirit killeth, but the letter giveth life*.

The kingdom of God is like a treasure in a field: Thus far, is the true use, and utmost power of the *letter*; it can tell us of a treasure that we want, and how and where it is to be found; but a man goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field, then beginneth the *divine knowledge*, which is nothing else, but the treasure possessed, and enjoyed. For except a man deny himself and forsake all that he hath, saith Christ, he cannot be my disciple; that is, he cannot partake of my mind, my spirit, and my nature, and therefore cannot know me; he is only a hearer of a treasure, without entering into the possession of it. And thus it is with all scripture, the letter can only direct to the doing of that which it cannot do, and give notice of something that it cannot give.

Good and evil, the only objects of religious knowledge are in us, are a part of us, as seeing and hearing

are in us, and we can have no real knowledge of them any other way, than as we have of our own *seeing and hearing*. And as no man can get or lose his seeing or hearing, or have less, or more of them, by any ideas, or notions, that he forms about them, just so it is with real good and evil, notions and ideas have no effect upon it. Yet no other knowledge is sought after, or esteemed but that which is notional and the work of the brain.

Thus, as soon as a man of speculation can demonstrate that, which he calls the *being and attributes of God*, he thinks, and others think, that he truly *knows* God. But what excuse can be made for such an imagination, when plain scripture has told him, that *to know God is eternal life*, that is, to know God, is to have the life, and the spirit of God *manifested* in him.

Again, another, forming an *opinion of faith* from the letter of scripture, straightway imagines, that he knows what faith is, and that he is *in the faith*. Sad delusion! For to know what faith is, or that we are in the faith, is to know that Christ is in us of a truth; it is to know the power of his life, his death, his resurrection and ascension, made good in our souls. To be in the faith, is to have done with notions about it, because it is felt by its living power and fruits within us, which are *righteousness, peace, and joy* in the Holy Ghost.

Would you divinely know the mysteries of grace and salvation? Let divine love work within you. Without this, be as learned and polite as you will, your heart is but the dark heart of fallen *Adam*, and your knowledge of the kingdom of God, will be only like that which murdering *Cain* had.—If love is not the spirit that forms and governs every thing that proceeds from you, every thing that has your labour, your allowance and consent; you are broken off from the works of God, you are without God, and your name and nature and works, can have no other name, or nature, but pride, wrath, envy, hypocrisy, hatred, revenge and self-exaltation.—No thing

thing can possibly save you from being the certain prey of all these evil spirits, but that love, which is God himself, his light, and spirit within you.

But now, since divine love can have no beginning, but from the divine nature in us, therefore saith St. *John*, we love him, because he FIRST loved us; the same as saying, we desire God, because he first desired us; for we could not desire God, but because he first desired us, we could not turn to God, but because he first turned to us.

Believe me then, thou great scholar, that all thou hast got of wisdom or learning, day after day, in any other school but this, will stand thee in as much stead, fill thee with as high comfort at the hour of death, as all the dreams which night after night, thou hast ever had in thy sleep.—And till a man knows this, with as much fullness of conviction, as he knows the vanity of a dream, he is not yet in the light of truth, not yet *taught of God*.

Behold your state ye ministers, that wait at Christian altars, who have neither faith, nor hope, nor desire of *heavenly fire* kindled in your souls; ye have a priesthood, and an altar not fit to be named with that, which in Jewish days, had an holy fire from God, descending upon it, which made priest and sacrifice acceptable to God, though only a type of that inward celestial fire, which Christ would kindle into a never ceasing burning, in the living temples of his new born children.

Complain then no more of Atheists, Infidels, and open enemies to the gospel kingdom of God; for whilst you call heavenly fire and spirit, downright phrensy, and mystic madness, you do all that infidel work within the church, which they do on the outside of it.—And if through a learned fear of having that done to your earthly reason, which was done to *Enoch* when God *took him*, ye will own no higher a regeneration, than a few cold drops of water sprinkled on the face, any of the heathen gods of wood and stone, are good enough for such an *elementary* priesthood.—For let this be told you, as a truth from God, that till *heavenly fire and spirit* are

within you, you can rise no higher by your highest learning, than to be elegant orators about scripture words.

What wonder then, if sacraments, church-prayers, and preachings, leave high and low, learned and unlearned, priests and people, as unaltered in all their aged vices, as they leave children unchanged in their childish follies? For where the *only* fountain of life and goodness is forsaken, all the difference between man and man, is as nothing with respect to the kingdom of God.—It matters not what name is given to the old man, whether he be called a zealous *churchman*, a stiff-necked *Jew*, a polite *heathen*, or a grave *infidel*: under all these names, he has but one and the same nature, without any other difference but that, which *time* and *place*, *education*, *complexion*, and *worldly wisdom*, happen to make. By such a one, whether he be Papist or Protestant, the gospel is only *kept*, as a book, and all that is within it, is only so much condemnation to the keeper, just as the old man, a *Jew*, hath kept the book of the law and prophets, only to be more fully condemned by them.

That the Jewish and Christian church, stand at this day in the *same kind* of apostacy, or fallen state, must be manifest to every one, that will not shut his eyes. Why ate the Jews in a fallen state? It is because they have refused him, who in his whole process, was the truth, the substance, the life, and fulfilling of all that, which was outwardly taught, in their law and prophets.

But is it not as easy to see, that the whole Christian church are in a fallen state, and for the same reason, because they are turned away from that Holy Spirit who was given to be the *only* life, and fulfilling of all that, which was *outwardly* taught by the gospel. For the Holy Spirit to come, was the same FULFILLING of the whole gospel, as a Christ to come, was the *fulfilling* of the law.—The Jew therefore with his old Testament, not owning Christ to be the truth and life, and fulfiller of their law, is in that same apostasy, as the Christian with his New Testament,

Testament, not owning the Holy Spirit, to be his only light, guide, and governor.—For as all types in the law, were but empty shadows without Christ's being the life and power of them, so all that is written in the gospel is but dead letter, unless the Holy Spirit be, the living rememberer, and the doer of them. Therefore where the Holy Spirit is not thus received, as the *whole power*, and life of the gospel state, it is no marvel, that Christians have no more of gospel virtues, than the Jews have of patriarchal holiness, or that the same vices which prosper amongst Jews, should break forth with as much strength in fallen Christendom. For the New Testament not ending in the coming of the Holy Spirit, with fulness of power over sin and hell, and the devil, is no better a help to *heaven*, than the Old Testament without the coming of a Messiah.

But here lies the great mistake, or rather idolatrous abuse of all God's outward dispensations.—They are taken for the thing itself, for the truth and essence of religion. That which the learned Jews did with the outward letter of their law, the learned Christians do with the outward letter of their gospel.—Why did the Jewish church so furiously cry out against Christ, Let him be crucified? It was because their letter-learned ears, their worldly Spirit, and temple orthodoxy, would not bear to hear of an inward Saviour, of being born again of his spirit, of his dwelling in them, and they in him.—To have their law of ordinances, their temple-pomp *sunk* into such a *fulfilling* Saviour as this, was such enthusiastic jargon to their ears, as forced their sober, rational theology, to call Christ, Beelzebub, and his doctrine blasphemy.

Our blessed Lord in a parable sets forth the blind Jews, as saying of himself, *We will not have this man to reign* OVER us.—The sober minded Christian scholar has none of this Jewish blindness, he only saith of Christ, we will not have this man to REIGN IN US, and so keeps clear of such absurdity, as St. Paul

fell into, when he enthusiastically said, *Yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me.*

Christian doctors reproach the old learned rabbies, for their vain faith, and carnal desire of a *glorious outward* Christ, who should set up their temple-worship all over the world.—Vanity indeed, and blindness enough !

But nevertheless, in these condemners of rabbinic blindness, St. Paul's words are remarkably verified, viz. *Wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest, doest the same thing.*—For, take away all that from Christ, which Christian doctors call enthusiasm, suppose him to be only an *outward, distant* heavenly prince, no more really in us, than our high cathedrals are in the *third heavens*, but only by an invisible hand from his throne on high, some way or other raising and helping *great scholars*, or *great temporal* powers, to make a rock in every nation for his church to stand upon ; suppose all this (which is the very marrow of modern divinity) and then you have that very *outward* Christ, and that very *outward* kingdom, which the carnal Jew dreamed of, and for the sake of which, the spiritual Christ was then nailed to the cross, and is still crucified by the new-risen Jew in the Christian church.

Let then the eager searcher into *words* for wisdom, the book-devourer, the opinion-broker, the exalter of human reason, and every projecting builder of religious systems, be told, that the thirst and pride of being *learnedly wise* in the things of God, is keeping up the grossest ignorance of them, and is nothing else but *Eve's* old serpent, and does no better work in the church of Christ, than her thirst after wisdom did in the paradise of God.—Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth, is the only way, by which any man ever did, or ever can attain divine knowledge, and divine goodness.—To knock at any other door, is like asking life of that, which is itself dead, or praying to him for bread, who has nothing but stones to give.

Say

Say not, that it is only the *illiterate* enthusiast, that condemns human learning in the gospel kingdom of God. For when he condemns the blindness and mischief of popish logic and criticism, he has all the learned protestant world with him; and when he lays the same charge to protestant learning, he has a much larger kingdom of popish great scholars, affirming the same thing. So that the private person, charging human learning with so much mischief to the church, is so far from being led by *enthusiasm*, that he is led by all the *church-learning* that is in the world.

Again, all learned Christendom agrees in the same charge against temporal power in the church, as hurtful to the very being, of a *kingdom* that is not of this world, as supporting doctrines that human learning has brought into it.—The *protestant* brings proof from a thousand years learning, that the *Pope* is an unjust usurper of temporal power in the church, Christ's spiritual spouse.—The *Papist* brings the learning of as many ages, to shew, that a temporal head of the church, is an anti-christian usurpation.—And yet (N. B.) he who holds Christ to be the only *head, heart and life* of the church, and that, *no man can call Jesus, Lord, but by the Holy Ghost*, passes with the learned of both these people, for a brain-sick enthusiast.—Is it not then high time, to look out for some better ground to stand upon, than such learning as this? Now look where you will, through the whole nature of things, no divine knowledge, goodness, and deliverance from sin, are any where to be found for fallen man, but in these *two points*; (1) a total entrance into the *whole process* of Christ; (2) a total resignation to, and dependence upon the continual operation of the Holy Ghost, to be our never ceasing light, teacher, and guide into all those ways of virtue, in which he himself walked in the flesh.—All besides this, call it by what name you will, is but dead work, a vain labour of the *old man*, to new create himself.—Let the Christian world depart from this *one* way of salvation, let any thing else be trusted to, but the *cross* of Christ,
and

and the Spirit of Christ, and then, though churches, and preachers and prayers, and sacraments, are every where in plenty, yet nothing better can come of it than a Christian kingdom of Pagan vices, along with a mouth-belief of an holy Catholic church, and communion of Saints.—To this melancholy truth, all Christendom both at home and abroad, bears full witness, Who need be told, that there is no corruption of human nature, no kind of pride, wrath, envy, malice, and self-love; no sorts of hypocrisy, falseness, cursing, swearing, perjury, and cheating; no wantonness of lust in every kind of debauchery, but are as common all over Christendom, as towns and villages.—But to pass these by, I shall only instance in two or three particulars, which though little observed, and less condemned, yet fully shew, that the devil is in possession of protestant, as well as popish churches.

And first, can it be said, that mammon is less served by Christians, than by Jews and Infidels? Or can there be a fuller proof, that Christians, Jews, and Infidels, are equally fallen from God, since truth itself has told us, That we cannot serve God and mammon? Is not this as unalterable a truth, as if it had been said, *Ye cannot serve God and Baal?* Or can it be affirmed, that the Mammonist has more of Christ in him, than the Baalist, or is more or less an idolater for being called a Christian, a Jew, or an Infidel? Look now at all those particulars, which Christ charged upon the Jewish priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, and you will see them all acted over again in Christendom. And if God's prophets were again in the world, they would have just the same complaints against the fallen Christian church, as they had against the old carnal stiff-necked Jews, namely, *that of their silver and gold, they had made themselves idols*, Hof. viii. 4. For though figured idol-gods of gold are not now worshipped either by Jews or Christians, yet silver and gold, with what which belongs to them, is the mammon-god, that sits and reigns in their hearts. How else could there be that universal

versal strife through all Christendom, who should stand in the richest and highest place, to preach up the humility of Christ, and offer spiritual sacrifices unto God? What God but mammon could put into the hearts of Christ's ambassadors, to make, or want to make a gain of that gospel, which from the beginning to the end, means nothing else but *separation* from every view, temper, and affection, that has any connexion with *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*?—Our blessed Lord said a word to the Jews, that might well have made their ears to tingle, when he told them, that they *had made his father's house a den of thieves*; because sheep and oxen were sold, and money changers sitting in the outer court of the temple.—Now if you will say, that mammon has brought forth no prophanation like this in our Christian church, your best proof must be this, because our church-sale, is not oxen and sheep, but holy things, cures of souls, parsonages, vicarages, &c. and our money-changers, our buyers and sellers, are chiefly consecrated persons.

Look at things spiritual, and things temporal, and say if you can, that the same arts, the same passions, and worldly wisdom, are not as active in the one, as in the other.—For if Christ at leaving the world, had said to his disciples, labour to be rich,—make full provision for the flesh,—be conformed to the world,—court the favour and interest of great men,—cloath yourselves with all the worldly honours, distinctions, and powers ye can get; I appeal to every man, whether Popish and Protestant churches need do any thing else, than that which they now do, to prove their faithfulness to such a master, and their full obedience to his precepts.

Again, *Secondly, Ye have heard, saith our Lord, that it hath been said by them of old; thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord, thine oaths. But I say unto you, swear not at all.* But notwithstanding this, through town and country, in all ignorant villages, in all learned colleges, in all courts spiritual and temporal, what with law-oaths, corporation-oaths, office-oaths, trade-oaths,

oaths, qualification-oaths, simony-oaths, bribery-oaths, election-oaths, &c. &c. &c. there is more swearing and for swearing, than all history reports of any idle-worshipping nations — It was said of old, *because of swearing, the land mourneth*: It is full as true to say now, because of swearing, the land rejoiceth in iniquity, is full of prophaness, and without any fear or awe of the divine Majesty, daily swallowing down all manner of oaths, with as much serious reflection, as pot-companions swallow down their liquor.

But to proceed to a third instance, of the full power of Antichrist, through every part of governing Christendom.

In the darkest ages of Romish superstition, a martial spirit of zeal for the gospel, broke forth in Kings, Cardinals, Bishops, Monks, and Friars, to lead the sheep of Christ, Saints, Pilgrims, Penitents, and Sinners of all kinds, to proceed in battle array, to kill, devour, and drive the Turks from the land of Palestine, and the old earthly *Jerusalem*. — These blood-thirsty expeditions were called an holy war, because it was a fighting for the holy land; they were called also a Croisade, because crucifixes made the greatest glitter amongst the sharpened instruments of human murder. — Thus under the banner of the cross, went forth an army of church wolves, to destroy the lives of those, whom the Lamb of God died on the cross to save.

The light which broke out at the reformation, abhorred the bloody zeal of these Catholic heroes. — But what followed from this new risen, reforming light, what came forth instead of these *holy Croisades*? Why wars, if possible, still more diabolical. — Christian kingdoms with blood-thirsty piety, destroying, devouring, and burning one another, for the sake of that which was called Popery, and that which was called Protestantism.

Now who can help seeing, that Satan, had here a much greater triumph over Christendom, than in all the holy wars that went before? For all that was then

then done, by such high-spirited fighters for old *Jerusalem's* earth, could not be said to be done against *gospel-light*, because not one in a thousand of those holy warriors, were allowed to see what was in the gospel. But now, with the gospel open in every one's hands, Papists and Protestants make open war against every *divine virtue*, which can unite them with the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world:—I say, against every divine virtue of the Lamb of God, for these are *the enemies* which Christian war conquers. For there is not a virtue of gospel-goodness, but has its death-blow from it.—Now fancy to yourself, Christ, after his divine sermon on the mount, putting himself at the head of a blood-thirsty army, or St. *Paul* going forth with a squadron of fire and brimstone, to make more havock in human lives, than a devouring earthquake.

But if this be too blasphemous an absurdity to be supposed, what follows, but that the Christian who acts in the fury of war, acts in full contrariety to the whole nature of Christ, and can no more be said to be led by his spirit, than those his enemies, who *came forth with swords and slaves for to take him*.

When a *most Christian Majesty*, with his Catholic church, sings a *Te Deum* at the high altar, for rivers of Protestant blood poured out; or an Evangelic church sings praise to the Lamb of God, for helping them from his holy throne in Heaven, to make Popish towns like to Sodom and Gomorrah, they blaspheme God, as much as *Cain* would have done, had he offered a sacrifice of praise to God, for helping him to murder his brother.—Let such worshippers of God be told, that the field of blood gives all its glory to Satan, who was a murderer from the beginning, and will to the end of his reign, be the only receiver of all the glory, that can come from it.

A glorious *Alexander* in the heathen world, is a shame and reproach to human nature, and does more mischief to mankind in a few years, than all wild beasts have done from the beginning of the world.—

world.—But the same hero making the same ravage from country to country with Christian soldiers has more thanks from the devil, than twenty Pagan *Alexanders*.—To make men kill men, is meat and drink to their roaring adversary, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour. But to make Christians kill Christians for the sake of Christ's church, is his highest triumph over the highest mark, which Christ hath set upon those whom he has purchased by his blood.—*This commandment, saith he, I give unto you, that ye love one another.—By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another as I have loved you.*—

Can the duellist, who had rather sheath his sword in the bowels of his brother, than stifle that which he calls an affront, can he be said to have this mark of his belonging to Christ?—Now, what is the difference between the haughty duellist meeting his adversary with sword and pistol behind a hedge, and two kingdoms with their high-spirited regiments slaughtering one another in the field of battle? It is the difference that is between the murder of one man, and the murder of an hundred thousand.

Now imagine the duellist *fasting and confessing* his sins to God to day, because he is engaged to fight his brother to-morrow; fancy again the conqueror got into his closet, on his bended knees, lifting up hands and heart to God, for blessing his weapons with the death of his brother; and then you have a picture in *little* of great piety, that begins and ends the wars all over heavenly Christendom!

What blindness can be greater, than to think that a Christian kingdom, can have any other goodness, or union with Christ, but that very goodness, which makes the private Christian to be one with him, and a partaker of the divine nature? Or that pride, wrath, ambition, envy, covetousness, rapine, revenge, hatred, and murder, are only the *works of the devil*, whilst they are committed by private, or single men; but when carried on by all the strength and authority, all the hearts, hands, and voices of a whole nation, that

that the devil is then quite driven out of them, loses all his right and power in them, and they become holy matter of church thanksgivings, and the sacred oratory of pulpits?

Look at that which the private Christian is to do to his neighbour, or his enemy, and you see that very thing, which one Christian kingdom is to do to another.

Now suppose a man, redeemed from his fallen nature, by Christ formed in his soul, and then he can no more be hired to kill men gloriously in the field, than to carry a dark lanthorn by night to a *powder-plot*.

The temporal miseries, which war carries along with it, wherever it goes, are neither to be numbered nor expressed.—What thievery bears any proportion to that, which with the boldness of drum and trumpet, plunders the innocent of all that they have? And if themselves are left alive, with all their limbs, or their daughters unravished, they have many times, only the ashes of their consumed houses to lie down upon.—What honour has war not gotten, from its tens and tens of hundreds of thousands of men slaughtered on heaps, with as little regret or concern, as at loads of rubbish thrown into a pit?—Who, but the fiery dragon, would put wreaths of laurel on such heroes heads? Who but he, could say unto them, *Well done, good and faithful servants?*

But there is still an evil of war much greater, though less regarded.—Who reflects, how many hundreds of thousands, nay millions of *young men*, born into this world for no other end, but that they may be born again, and from sons of *Adam's* misery, become sons of God, and fellow heirs with Christ in everlasting glory; who reflects, I say, what nameless numbers of these, are robbed of God's precious gift of life, before they have known the sole benefit of living; who are not suffered to stay in this world, till age and experience have done their best for them, have helped them to know the in-

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ward voice of God's spirit, helped them to find, and feel that curse, and sting of sin and death, which must be taken from within them, before they can die the death of the righteous; but instead of this, have been either forced, or tempted in the fire of youth, and full strength of sinful lusts, to forget God, eternity, and their own souls; and rush in to a kill or be killed, with as much furious haste, and goodness of spirit, as *tiger kills tiger* for the sake of his prey?

That God's providence over his fallen creatures, is a providence of love and salvation, turning through ways of infinite wisdom, sooner or later, all kinds of evil into *good*, making that which was lost to be found, that which was dead, to be alive again; not willing that one single sinner should want that, which can save him from eternal death, is a truth as certain, as that God's name is, I AM that I AM.

Amongst unfallen creatures in heaven, God's name and nature, is LOVE, LIGHT, and GLORY. —To the fallen sons of *Adam*, that which was *love*, *light*, and *glory* in heaven, becomes infinite PITY and COMPASSION on earth, in a God, cloathed with the nature of his fallen creature, bearing all its infirmities, entering into all its troubles, and in meek innocence, living a life, and dying a death, of all the sufferings due to sin. —Hence it was, that when this DIVINE PITY suffered its own life-giving blood to be poured on the ground, all outward nature made full declaration of its atoning, and redeeming power; the strength of the earth did quake, the hardness of rocks was forced to split, and long covered graves to give up their dead. —A certain presage, that all kinds of hellish *wrath*, *malice*, *pride*, *envy*, and earthly *passions*, which kept men under the power of Satan, must have the fullness of death, from that all-powerful, all-purifying blood of the Lamb, which will never cease washing RED into WHITE, till all the sons of *Adam* are fit for their

their several mansion's in their heavenly Father's house.

Sing, O ye heavens, and shout all ye lower parts of the earth, for this is **OUR GOD** that varies not, whose first creating love knows no change, but into a *redeeming pity* towards all his fallen creatures.

Look now at *warring Christendom*, what smallest drop of pity towards sinners is to be found in it? Or how could a spirit all hellish, more fully contrive and hasten their destruction?—It stirs up every passion of fallen nature, that is contrary to the humble, meek, loving, forgiving, spirit of Christ.—It drives, and compels nameless numbers of unconverted sinners to fall, murdering and murdered, among flashes of fire, with the wrath and swiftness of lightning, into a fire infinitely worse than that in which they died.—O sad subject for thanksgiving-days, whether in Popish, or Protestant churches! For if there is a joy of all the angels in heaven, for *one sinner* that repenteth, what a joy must there be in hell over such multitudes of sinners, not suffered to repent? And if they who have *converted many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars in the firmament for ever*, what woe may they not fear, whose proud wrath and vain glory, have robbed such numberless troops of poor wretches, of all time and place of knowing what righteousness they wanted, for the salvation of their immortal souls!

Here my pen trembles in my hand; but when, O when will one single Christian church, people, or language, tremble at the share they have in this death of sinners!

For the **GLORY OF HIS MAJESTIES ARMS**, said once a *most christian King*: Now if at that time his catholic church had called a solemn assembly to unite hearts and voices in this pious prayer, “O blessed Jesus, dear redeeming Lamb of God, who camest down from heaven, to save mens lives, and not destroy them, go along we humbly pray thee, with our bomb-vessels and fire-ships, suffer not our

thundering cannon to roar in vain, but let thy tender hand of love and mercy, direct *their* balls to more heads and hearts of thine own redeemed creatures, than the poor skill of man is able of itself to do."—
—Had such prayers had more of the *son of perdition* in them, than the most christian King's glorying in his arms?

Again, would you farther see the fall of the universal church, look at all *European Christendom* sailing round the globe, with fire and sword, and every murdering art of war, to seize the possessions, and kill the inhabitants of *both the Indies*.—What natural right of man, what supernatural virtue was not here trodden under foot?—All that you ever read or heard of Heathen barbarity, was here outdone by Christian conquerors. And to this day, what wars of Christians against Christians, blended with *scalping* Heathens, still keep staining the *earth* and the *seas* with human blood, for a miserable share in the spoils of a plundered Heathen world! A world, which should have heard, or seen, or felt nothing from the followers of Christ, but a divine love, that had forced them from distant lands, and through the perils of long seas, to visit strangers with those glad tidings of peace and salvation to all the world, which angels from heaven, and shepherds on earth, proclaimed at the birth of Christ.

Here now, let the *wisdom of this world* from its learned throne condemn all this as *enthusiasm*; it need be no trouble to any one, to be condemned by that wisdom, which God himself hath condemned as *foolishness*. For the wisdom of this world hath all the contrariety to *divine wisdom*, that the flesh hath to the spirit, earth to heaven, or damnation to salvation. It is a wisdom, whose spirit and breath keep all the evil that is in fallen man alive, and which in its highest excellence, has only the full grown nature of that *carnal mind, which is enmity against God*.—It is a wisdom, that turns all salvation-truths into empty, learned tales, that instead of helping the sinner to confess his sins, and feel the misery that is hid
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under them, helps him to an art of hiding, nay of defending them; and so the poor blinded sinner, lives and dies in a total ignorance of that light, blessing, and salvation, which could only be had by a broken and contrite heart.—For (N. B.) with respect to conscience, this is the chief office of worldly wisdom; it is to keep all things quiet in the old man, that whether busied in things spiritual, or temporal, he may keep up the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, without any disturbance from religious phantoms, and dreams of idiots, who for want of sober sense, and sound learning, think that Christ really meant what he said in these words, *Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

Now join (if you please) learning and religion to act in fellowship with this worldly wisdom, and then you will have a depravity of craft and subtlety, as high as flesh and blood can carry it, which will bring forth a glittering *Pharisee*, with a hardness of heart, greater than that of the sinner-*publican*.

This wisdom hath asked me, how it is possible for Christian kingdoms in the neighbourhood of one another, to preserve themselves, unless the strength and weapons of war, are every ones defence, against such invasions, incroachments, and robberies, as would otherwise be the fate of Christian kingdoms from one another.

This question is so far from needing to be answered by me, that it is wholly on my side; it confesses all, and proves all that I have said of the state of Christendom.—For if this is the governing spirit of Christian kingdoms, that no one of them can subsist in safety from its neighbour, but by its weapons of war, are not all Christian kingdoms equally in the same *unchristian* state, as two neighbouring *bloody knaves*, who cannot be safe from one another, but as their murdering arms protect them? This plea therefore for Christendom's wars, proves nothing else but the want of Christianity all over the Christian

tian world, and stands upon no better a foundation of righteousness, than when one murdering knave kills another, that would have killed him.

But to know whether Christianity wants, or admits of war, Christianity is to be considered in its right state.—Now the true state of the world turned Christian, is thus described by the great gospel-prophet. “ They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks : Nation shall not lift up its sword against nation, (N. B.) neither shall they learn war any more.”—This is the prophet's true Christendom, with the same essential mark set upon it, as when the Lamb of God said, *By this shall all men know, ye are my disciples, if ye love one another as I have loved you.*

Would you see when and where the kingdoms of this world are become a kingdom of God, the prophet tells you that it is *then* and *there* where all enmity ceaseth.—“ The wolf, saith he, shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. The calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed, and their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den.”—For, N. B. *they shall not HURT or DESTROY in all my holy mountain, that is, through all holy Christendom. Isaiah xi. 6.*

See here a kingdom of God on the earth ; is nothing else but a kingdom of mere love, where all HURT and DESTROYING is done away, and every work of enmity changed into heavenly love.

Asto the present state of Christendom, working under the spirit and power of the great fiery dragon, it is not my intention, to shew how any part of it can preserve itself from being devoured by every other part, but by its own dragon weapons.

But the Christendom I mean, that neither wants, nor allows of war, is only that where Christ is King,
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and his holy spirit the governor of the wills, affections, and designs of all that belong to it. — It is my charge upon all the nations of Christendom, that this necessity of murdering arms, is the dragon's *monster*, that is equally brought forth by all and every part of fallen Christendom; and that therefore all and every part, as well Popish as Protestant, are at the same distance from the spirit of their Lord, and therefore all want the same entire reformation.

In these last ages of Christendom, many reformations have taken place; but alas! Truth must be forced to say, that they have been in all their variety, little better than so many lesser *Babels* come out of *Babylon* the great. — For among all the reformers, the one only true reformation hath never yet been thought of.

The wisdom of this world, with its worldly spirit, was the only thing that had overcome the church, and had carried it into captivity. For in captivity it certainly is, as soon as it is turned into a kingdom of this world. Not a false doctrine, not a bad discipline, or corrupt practice ever prevailed in the church, but had its birth from worldly wisdom.

This wisdom, was the great evil root, at which the reforming axe should have been laid and must be laid, before the church can be again that virgin spouse of Christ, which it was at the beginning.

If therefore you take any thing to be church-reformation, but a full departure from the wisdom of this world, or any thing to be your entrance into a salvation-church, but the *nature* and *spirit* of Christ, in you, then, whether Papist, or Protestant, all will be just as much good to you, as when a Sadducee turns Publican, or a Publican a Pharisee. — And here it is well to be observed, that the church of Christ is solely for this end, to make us holy as he is holy. But nothing can do this, but that which hath power to change a sinner into a saint. And he who has not found *that power* in the church, may be assured, that he is not yet a true son of the church.

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But this can only be done, just as the change of night into day is done, or as the darkness is lost in the light.—Something as contrary to the whole nature of sin, as light is to darkness, and as powerful over it, as the light is powerful over darkness, can alone do this.—Creeds, canons, articles of religion, stately churches, learned priests, singing, preaching, and praying in the best contrived form of words, can no more raise a dead sinner into a living saint, than a *fine system* of light and colours can change the night into day.

On this ground it is that the apostle said, *Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing*; and on the same ground it must be said, that Popery is nothing, and Protestantism is nothing, because all is nothing, as to salvation, but a sinner changed into a saint, or the apostle's new creature.

Many are the *marks* which the learned have given us of the true church; but be that as it will, no man, whether learned or unlearned, can have any proof of his own *true church-membership*, but his being dead unto all sin, and alive unto all righteousness.—This cannot be more plainly told us, than in these words of our Lord, *He that committeth sin, is the servant of sin*; but surely that servant of sin, cannot at the same time be a living member of Christ's body.—To suppose a man born again, yet under a necessity of continuing to sin, is as absurd as to suppose, that the true Christian is only to have so much of the nature of Christ, as is consistent with Satan's still dwelling in him.—*If the son, saith Christ, shall make you free, then ye shall be free indeed.* What is this, but saying, if Christ is in you, a true freedom from all necessity of sinning is given you. Now if this cannot come to pass in the faithful follower of Christ, it must be, because both the willing and working of Christ in man, is too weak to overcome that which the devil willeth and worketh in him.—All this absurdity, and even blasphemy, is necessarily implied in that common doctrine of books and pulpits, that the Christian can never have done sinning, as long as he lives.

Preachers.

Preachers and writers comfort the half Christians with telling them, that God *requireth* not a perfect, sinless obedience, but *accepteth* the sincerity of our weak endeavours instead of it.—Here if ever, the *blind lead the blind* —For St. Paul comparing the way of salvation to a race, saith, *In a race all run, but ONE obtaineth the prize: so run that ye may obtain.*—Now if Paul had seeing eyes, must not they be blind, who teach, that God *accepteth* of all *that run* in the religious race, and *requireth* not that any should obtain the prize.—How easy was it to see, that the sincerity of our weak endeavours, was quite a different thing from that, which alone is, and can be the *required* perfection of our lives? The first, God *accepteth*, that is, beareth with. But why or how? Not because he *seeketh* or *requireth* no more, but he beareth with them, because, though at a great distance from, they are making towards the perfection, or new creature, which he *absolutely requires*, which is the *fullness of the stature of Christ*, and is that which Paul saith, is the ONE that obtaineth the prize.

The pleader for perfection farther supports himself by saying, no man in the world, Christ excepted, was ever without sin.—And so say I too; and with the apostle I also add, *That if we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar.*—But then it is as true to say, that we make him a liar, if we deny the possibility of our ever being freed from a necessity of sinning. For the same word of God saith, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

But surely he that is under a necessity of sinning, as long as he lives, can no more be said to be cleansed from *all unrighteousness*, than a man who must be a cripple to his dying day, can be said to be cured of *all his lameness*.—What weaker conclusion can well be made, than to infer, that because Christ was the only man, that was born and lived free from sin, therefore no man on earth can be raised to a freedom from sinning; no better than concluding, that because our

Redeemer

Redeemer could not find us any thing but *sinners*, therefore he must of all necessity leave us *sinners*.

The sober divine, who abhors the pride of Enthusiasts, saith of himself and all men, We are poor, blind, imperfect creatures, all our natural faculties are perverted, corrupted, and out of their right state, and therefore nothing that is perfect can come from us, or be done by us. Truth enough! And the very same truth, as when the apostle saith, *The natural man knoweth not the things that be of God.*—But what scripture ever required perfect works from this man, any more than it requires the *Ethiopian* to change his skin? Or what an instructed divine must he be, who considers this old natural man, as the Christian, and therefore rejects Christian perfection, because this *old man* cannot attain to it? What greater blindness than to appeal to our fallen state, in proof of a corruption, which we must have, when we are redeemed from it? Is this any wiser, than saying, that sin and corruption must be there *where* Christ is, because it is *there*, where he is not?

To what end do we pray, that *this day we may fall into no sin*, if no such day can be had? But if sinning can be made to cease in us for one day, what can do this for us, but that which can do the same to-morrow? What benefit in praying, that *God's will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven*, if the earth as long as it lasts, must have as many sinners, as it has men upon it? How vainly does the church pray for the baptized person, that he may have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world and the flesh, if this victorious triumph can never be obtained? If notwithstanding this baptism and prayer, he must continue committing sin, and so be a servant of sin, as long as he lives?

See how St. Paul sets forth the true church.—*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*—Here we have the one

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true church infallibly described.—He goes on. *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.*—Therefore to be in Christ, or in his church, belongs to no one, but because the old man is *put off*, and the new man is *put on*.—The same thing is said again in these words, *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, That (N. B.) HENCE-FORTH we should not serve sin.*

Away then with all the tedious volumes of church unity, church power, and church salvation.—Ask neither a council of Trent, nor a synod of Dort, nor an Assembly of divines, for a definition of the church. The apostle has given you, not a definition, but the unchangeable nature of it, in these words.—But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. Therefore to be in the true church, and to be in Christ a new creature which sinneth not, is the same thing.

Look at all that is outward, and all that you then see, has no more of salvation in it, than the stars and elements.—Look at all the good works you can think of, they have no goodness for you, but when the good spirit of God is the doer of them.—For all the outward works of religion may be done by the *natural man*, he can observe all church-duties, stick close to doctrines, and put on the semblance of every outward virtue; thus high he can go. But no Christian, till led by the spirit of God, can go any higher than this outward formality; to which he can add nothing, but his own natural, fleshly zeal in the defence of it. *My little children*, saith St. Paul, *of whom I travail again in birth, till Christ be formed in you.* This is the whole labour of an apostle to the end of the world. He has nothing to preach to sinners, but the absolute necessity, the true way, and the certain means of being born again.—But if dropping this one thing he becomes a disputing reformer about words and opinions, and helps Christians to be zealously separated from one another, for the sake of being saved by different

ferent notions of faith, works, justification, or election, he has forgot his errand, and is become a blind leader of all who are blind enough to follow him.

The eternal Son of God came into the world, only for the sake of this new birth, to give God the glory of restoring it to all the dead sons of fallen *Adam*.—All the mysteries of this incarnate, suffering, dying Son of God, all the price that he paid for our redemption, all the washings that we have from his all cleansing blood poured out for us, all the life that we receive from eating his flesh and drinking his blood, have their infinite value, their high glory, and amazing greatness in this, because nothing less than these supernatural mysteries of a God-Man could raise a new creature out of *Adam's* death, which could be again a living temple, and habitation of the spirit of God.

All that Christ was, did, suffered, dying in the flesh, and ascending into heaven, was for this sole end, to purchase for all his followers, a new birth, new life, and new light, in and by the spirit of God restored to them, and living in them, as their support, comforter, and guide into all truth.—And this was his, **LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD.**



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